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MYSTERY OF THE LOST DAUPHIN

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"When the world salutes me King, you will admit I am your brother."

[Page 338.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST DAUPHIN

(Louis XVII)

BY

EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

BY

ANNABEL HORD SEEGER

FRONTISPIECE ILLUSTRATION

BY

RAPHAEL BODÉ

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EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

WHILE Provençal literature blossomed in chivalric splendor along the northern shore of the Mediterranean and rare pastoral music in madrigals and roundelays rang through France and Italy, there sounded from the sea-girt province of Galicia wonderful songs which rivalled the sweetest strains of the troubadours, making kings to weep and warriors to smile, thrilling, by their wit and pathos and lyrical beauty, the brilliant courts of Castile and Leon.

It is an ethnographical phenomenon that, in Great Britain, France and Spain, the Celt has been pushed to the northwest. Galicia corresponds in position to Brittany and her people are characterized by the powerful imagination, infinite delicacy, concentration of feeling and devotion to nature which are the salient attributes of Gaelic and Cymric genius.

The Modern Literary Renaissance of Galicia,

a superb outburst of Gallegan exuberance, has a noble and eloquent exponent in Emilia Pardo Bazán, gifted child of this poetic soil.

Senora Pardo Bazan has been called the creator and protagonist of Spanish Realism. It has been claimed that she bears to Spain such a relation as Turgénieff to Russia and Zola to France. She herself says somewhere that she is skeptical regarding the existence of Realistic, Idealistic and Romantic writers, averring, in her trenchant style, that authors constitute but two classes, *good* and *poor*. "Certain critics would affirm," she remarks, "that, as simple as the cleaving in twain of an orange is the operation of separating writers into Realistic and Idealistic camps."

One biographer claims that our author sacrifices sex to art and that the result warrants the sacrifice. I would insist that 'tis a lady's hand wielding the mailed gauntlet and that reading Pardo Bazán helps one to understand why Great Brahm is described as partaking of the feminine principle.

Castelar has remarked that: "In Belles Lettres we have the illustrious Celt, Emilia Pardo Bazan, whom, living, we count among the immortals, and whose works, though of yesterday, are already denominated Spanish classics." Garcia, in his History of Spanish Literature, calls her the Spanish

de Staël. Rollo Ogden writes: "No masculine pen promises more than that of Pardo Bazan. Her equipment is admirable; it is based on exhaustive historical and philosophical studies, from which she passed on to the novel. In this transition does she resemble George Eliot, whom, however, she surpasses in many respects."

G. Cunninghame Graham remarks: "We have not in England, no, nor in Europe, so illustrious a woman in letters as Pardo Bazan." Goran Bjorkman declares that "Among Spanish writers, Pardo Bazan most resemble Turgénieff, excelling him, however, in the sane gayety of her temperament."

Senora Pardo Bazán is descended from a noble and illustrious family, in whose genealogy Victor Hugo sought the characters of his Ruy Blas. An only daughter, her childhood was passed amid her father's extensive library. When scarcely sixteen she was married to the scholarly gentleman, Don José Quiroga. Several subsequent years were occupied in European travels and study, at the conclusion of which she consecrated herself to the literary labors which have yielded so rich a harvest. To enumerate these masterpieces of contemporaneous Spanish letters would be superfluous. They have been translated into every European tongue.

Doña Emilia, as she is affectionally called by the

Spanish people, passes her winters in Madrid, her salon being the rendezvous of the literary, political and diplomatic world. The author smacks not of the bas bleu; she is a simple woman in the truest sense of the word, and a regal grande dame as well.

Annabel Hord Seeger.

A GREAT GRANDSON OF LOUIS XVI

OVER one hundred and thirteen years ago, in Paris, at ten in the morning of the twenty-first day of January, seventeen hundred and ninety-three, Louis Seize bowed his head beneath the guillotine's blade, as the Abbé Edgeworth called aloud, "Son of Saint Louis, ascend into heaven!" and as the surging multitude sent up the wild shout, "Vive la République!"

A few months ago, in Paris, at ten in the morning of the twenty-first day of January, nineteen hundred and six, two automobiles drew up before the parish church, Saint-Denis de la Chapelle, whose historic walls, fifteen centuries since, enclosed during life the intrepid and holy patroness of France, Geneviève de Nanterre; before whose shrine, five centuries since, the glorious virgin Savior of the realm, Jeanne d'Arc, passed an entire day in prayer; whose sacred aisles were ever the

avenues for the royal feet in ancient times, on the termination of the coronation ceremony.

From these automobiles alights a party headed by a slender grave-looking young man of simple charming manners whose light grey eyes smile often. He is accompanied by a graceful young matron leading by the hand a handsome little fellow of some six years who wears a Louis Dix-Sept coiffure and long auburn curls on his shoulders.

An elderly lady of patrician countenance stands near me. I turn inquiring eyes into hers. With the grace and courtesy of a salon dame, she beckons me closer, whispering in my ear:

"His Majesty Jean III, Her Majesty Marie Madelaine and His Royal Highness the Dauphin, Henri-Charles-Louis."

My companion reverently and profoundly inclines her body, as the procession rushes past us. I do likewise, albeit with an unpleasant consciousness of an absence of the grace which envelops this member of the "Survivance" at my side.

As we raise our heads, a man of distinguished appearance and of a pronounced Bourbon type hurries past us, to join the advancing party.

" 'Tis Monsieur," observes the lady. " 'Tis the Prince Charles-Louis. He is the soul of the cause."

We follow his elegant person past the kneeling congregation which fills the central nave. The royal family approach the chancel until reaching the group of crimson prie-Dieus and velvet cushions. The sanctuary is crimson-draped; the white-haired venerable prelate is crimson-robed; the altar blazes with the crimson tongues of wax tapers: for 'tis a *Messe Rouge* that is to be celebrated today, in honor of the royal victim of one hundred and thirteen years ago.

"Explain to me the genealogy," I say to my guide, when we have taken seats.

"The slender dark-haired gentleman and Monsieur are the great grandsons of Louis Seize."

"In what manner are they descended?"

"Their father was Charles-Edmond Naundorff, fifth child of Charles William Naundorff, the Prussian watch-maker, who claimed the French crown during the reign of his uncle, known in history as Louis XVIII."

"Tell me more of these gentlemen."

"Jean III, whose entire name is Auguste-Jean-Charles-Emmanuel de Bourbon, was born in Maestricht, Holland, in 1872. He and Monsieur were adopted in early childhood by their father's sister, Amélie, the wife of Monsieur Laprade of Poictiers—the beautiful, imperious Amélie whose

face was the reincarnation in feature and expression of the ill-fated martyr queen, Marie Antoinette."

"Was not that resemblance accepted as corroborating evidence of her father's integrity?"

"Madame," said my aristocratic companion, turning upon me wonderful glowing eyes that seemed to reflect a throne transformed into a scaffold, "Madame, the face of Amélie Naundorff convulsed the government of the Restoration to such an extent that even the palsied limbs of the man called Louis XVIII, grew rigid in terror. During one crucial moment the usurper summoned the strength to stand upon his bandaged feet and shatter with one blow the ascendancy of his nephew, Charles William Naundorff."

"What arm did he employ?"

"That arm which the iniquitous ever use against the upright; the rectitude and tenderness of a noble nature."

"Explain."

"Naundorff's despoilers turned upon him the only effectual weapon at their disposal: they turned, rather they bade him turn upon himself, the greatness and simplicity of his own heart."

I cast my eyes upon the group before the altar, upon the dark grave man, all simplicity, candor

and earnestness; upon the gentle comely lady beside him, and the little fellow in the Louis Dix-Sept coiffure. . . . . Just then Monsieur turned his superb head and the fine Bourbon features irradiated the old charm which history and tradition have sought to transmit, but which only the blood of Henri de Navarre can make glowing with life."

The lady placed her elegantly gloved hand upon my arm.

"From their earliest years, the boys were cautioned not to reveal their real name. Under the appellation of Lisbois they were successively placed in several schools. Their identity was more than once discovered, whereupon they were removed. On leaving college, they spent several years in Brittany and Paris, completing their education. Jean III lived on the estate of Monsieur Gabaudan from 1893 to 1898. Monsieur Gabaudan manages an extensive wine business. Jean III, with the shrewd common sense of his grandfather and with the mechanical instinct of his great-grandfather, mastered the details of this business. Only one road seemed to lie before him. He resolutely followed it. In 1900 he removed to Paris. Under the name of De Lisbois, he was connected with a petroleum

house. During the last two years, he has, under his true name, been the director of a drilling and sounding company in the interest of which he has made several voyages to Algeria."

"What are Monseigneur's ideas with regards to royal pretensions and claims?"

"Jean III has declared that he will never conspire to be placed upon a throne. 'Circumstances,' says he, 'will decide my destiny.' "

"Has he adherents among the nobility?"

"His following is from all classes. The grandfathers of the present nobility well knew that Jean de Bourbon's grandfather was the rightful King of France."

"What of men of letters?"

"Many eloquent pens are consecrated to his cause. Eloquence, however, is no requisite in the presentations of his claim. The Naundorffists demand only to tell the plain truth."

"What is the official organ of the party?"

"La Légitimité, edited in Bordeaux, now in its twenty-third year."

"I have never seen a copy."

"C'est bien facile, Madame. You tell me you are leaving for New York. The Salmagundi Club contains on file numbers of interesting books and magazines having reference to Louis

XVII. But, if you have the time today, I will gladly accompany you to the official headquarters of the party, namely, the office of Monsieur Daragon, the accomplished editor of Le Revue Historique de la Question Louis XVII."

Monsieur Daragon is a true Frenchman, amiable, courteous, charming. His office is the rendezvous of notable personages pertaining to the cause and his bookshelves are laden with volumes of Louis XVII literature. I purchased the scholarly memoirs of Otto Freidrichs entitled "Correspondance de Louis XVII" and Osmond's "Fleur de Lys," a most interesting and convincing work.

* * * * *

In the February number of the Critic of New York, Mr. J. Sanford Saltus asks:

"The next King of France—who will he be? A question often put by the adherents of the Duc d'Orleans, Don Carlos, Victor Napoleon and Jean de Bourbon.

"Jean de Bourbon is the youngest of the 'Pretenders' and his claim is based upon the assumption that his grandfather, Charles William Naundorff was the Dauphin, the son of Louis XVI, who according to popular rumor, died in prison June 8, 1795, and was buried at night

in an unmarked grave by the church yard of Sainte-Marguerite, in an obscure Paris quarter. That the Dauphin did *not* die in prison, but that, with the assistance of friends, he escaped therefrom,—a sick child being left in his stead,—is now the almost universally accepted belief of historians. It is thought that his escape was known to Fouché and Josephine Beaubarnais and that, beside the sick child, several other children, whose names were respectively, Tardif Leminger, de Jarjages, and Gornhaut, were used as blinds, while the real Louis XVII was being helped out of the country by the Royalists."

Mr. Saltus continues further on:

"At Delft, Holland, August 10, 1845, ended the adventurous life of the exile Charles William Naundorff. His grave, by official permission, bore his true name. On June 8, 1904, the remains were exhumed and re-interred in the new cemetery at Delft and once more, by official permission, the same inscription appears.

"King William II, King William III and Queen Wilhelmina have allowed this inscription to remain unmolested. Why? On the coming of age of the Naundorffs, the Dutch government gives them permission to assume their real name."

Annabel Hord Seeger.

Book I

MARTIN, THE SEER

The Lost Dauphin

Chapter I

THE LOVERS

IN a London quarter near the Thames, little frequented by day and almost deserted by night, there is a house with a small garden facing an extensive park from whose centre majestically rise groups of trees that have stood for a century or more, those trees of the old English soil which constant moisture nourishes and develops into colossal proportions. The memories attaching to this modest structure would be well worth exploitation by the historian, but Clio has chosen to avert her face from this, the scene of the most dismal historical drama whose narration was ever stifled into silence.

The tragedy which for a while was bounded by the walls of that pygmy house will forever remain in shadow, for such has been the decree of Destiny, —rather, such has been the will of certain powerful men in high places.

On the evening when this narrative opens, the prolonged spring twilight had lost every trace of the sunset afterglow when an aristocratic, stalwart young man enveloped in a gray cloak which did not conceal the symmetry of his form, approached the grating at the rear of the house and knocked on the iron bars with his cane four times at regular intervals. A moment later a white skirt gleamed amid the shrubbery and the face of its young possessor shone back of the grating. A dainty hand glided through the bars and the visitor clasped it ardently. Affectionate greetings followed and anxious questionings, too, for these plighted hearts could but claim Love's arrears after their long separation.

"Did you arrive to-day?"

"I have but just come, not even taking time to change my clothes. The letter which I sent preceded me but half an hour."

"Do *they* know you are here?"

"No. They think I am hunting on my Picmort estate."

A brief silence followed. The woman—the girl, rather, for she was scarcely more than sixteen—contracted the arch of her perfect brow.

"I do not understand the reason for the de-

ception, René. Why should you be ashamed of loving me?"

He seemed at a loss for an answer and then with an effort, said:

"Amélie, my own, I have taken this journey for the sole purpose of giving you the reason. It is eight months since we were separated, and during that time I have written you seldom because you warned me that letters directed to your family either arrive unsealed or else fail to arrive. Besides, Amélie, there is something I ought to say to you, but I—give me both your adored hands, for only so can I speak. Courage, courage, Amélie. Trust me; I shall be constant. Oh, my love," he suddenly broke off, "do not ask me to speak, but believe that whatever I should now attempt toward the realization of our union would fail utterly—"

"Would fail utterly," she repeated scornfully. "You, a man, speak such words! What, then, did your vows signify?"

Her beautiful face gleamed like a cameo against the darkness.

"In God's name, Amélie, listen and be not so harsh. I came from France to ask you to believe in me and not force me to speak. May I not be silent for the present?"

"No. I demand the truth, be that what it may."

René's attitude revealed the struggle through which he was passing, and when his words came, it was as if they were hammered out of him.

"Amélie, since we were together at the mill of Adhemar, I have thought only of you. I had been a madcap; I became serious and high-minded. I had cared only for Parisian follies and wild hunts in the forests; these I renounced, for they ceased to charm me. My mother had arranged for me a brilliant marriage. You know of Germaine de Marigny whose lineage includes crusader knights. Well, I broke the troth, regardless of consequences. I asked you not whence you came nor whither you went. You had said that your father was a mechanic in London and that your life had been passed almost in indigence. When I thought of my rank and estates, 'twas to reflect with pride that I should surround my wife with every luxury. I knew that my mother would execrate and my uncle disinherit me. Nevertheless, I was determined to overleap all barriers and disregard almost everything that claimed my allegiance."

"But having had time for reflection," Amélie remarked coldly, "you have concluded that you had almost committed a signal folly. I admit

that you have decided wisely, and bid you now consider yourself free."

She half turned from the grating, but he seized one of her hands, then her soft white wrist and passionately kissed it.

"No, no! You are unjust, Amélie. You force me now to say what I would withhold. Listen. When my mother vehemently declared that a de Brezé should never give his name to a woman of humble origin, I replied that the most illustrious ladies of France could not outrival you, and that beauty and goodness are entitled to the very highest social distinction."

"But your mother has at length convinced you that you uttered but the enthusiastic hyperboles of a too ardent lover."

She felt him tremble as he grasped her hands tightly and continued:

"I know not what deity established the code of honor. We hold honor to be even more sacredly binding than religion. A gentleman may sin a hundred times daily, but not once does he violate the obligations bequeathed him by his fathers. Life and happiness are worth much less than honor, Amélie."

"Well?" she asked, trying to speak calmly, but in vain.

"O my Love," cried the man, "forgive me, forgive me, for I am about to wound you cruelly. My mother, who had of late refrained from opposing my attachment to you, called me to her yesterday and shut the door upon us. Then she said: 'René, after vainly striving for months to change your purpose, I withdrew my opposition, fearing that I was unduly imposing my maternal authority. You were free, in possession of your patrimony and twenty-seven years of age. So I resigned myself to the mésalliance and began to interest myself in the antecedents of your idol. I wrote to Spandau, the sometime residence of her people, with the result—"

He could not continue, but Amélie haughtily commanded:

"Go on!"

Hurriedly, almost despairingly, he concluded: "With the result that I have received the information, corroborated by these documents, that the girl's father has served a twenty months' sentence at hard labor in Alstadt, Silesia, having been convicted as a counterfeiter and incendiary."

"What more?" demanded the girl.

"O Amélie, is not that enough?"

"Enough, indeed," she answered, wrenching away her hands. "Farewell, Monsieur Marquis

de Brezé. We have exchanged our last words." And she sped into the house before he could detain her.

Chapter II

MEMORIES

THE Marquis remained at the grating, hoping that Amélie would return. When night closed in and she showed no signs of relenting, he wandered aimlessly through the streets, walking slowly, abstractedly, his mind absorbed with the beautiful imperious girl he so loved and between whom and himself had been thrust the proofs of her father's felony. He became oblivious of even the need of food, though he had eaten nothing since reaching England and putting up at the Hotel Douglas, a fourth-class tavern selected with the object of concealment from chance compatriots.

His wanderings conducted him back to the Thames, from whose turbid surface towered the masts of many vessels as they rocked at their moorings. His eyes rested vacantly on the waters, spangled with reflections of the stars overhead, as he recalled the history of his passion for this unknown woman and his first meeting with her in the home of Elois Adhemar, the miller on the de Brezé estate.

René had been in the habit of stopping for a glass of beer or warm milk at the mill, on returning from hunts on his fertile and extensive domains, and sundry pretty gallantries did he whisper into the ear of his host's winsome daughter, Geneviève —village beauty and rustic coquette—with a deep bosom and gleaming teeth.

When during the Revolution the de Brezé castle was fired, a torch was simultaneously applied to the Adhemar mill, for these loyal servitors were stanch legitimists. The Marquis de Brezé and the Count de Lestrier, father and uncle respectively to René, were at the time in exile with the royal family. Elois Adhemar had fled to Switzerland, serving as a hand at the great mill of Berne, from which city he returned as an expert miller to France while the revolutionary ferment was quieting down. He repaired the mill and awaited the arrival of the de Brezé family, which was to regain possession of its estates with the advent of the Restoration. René was the head of the family, for his father had died in foreign lands. His mother, the Duchess de Rousillon, rebuilt the castle with increased magnificence, and it was during her occupation of it with her son that the latter contracted the habit of visiting the faithful Adhemar.

One day he met at the miller's house a young

girl whom the family called Mademoiselle Amélie. She had come to renew her broken health in the fresh country air. René, standing now by the river, recalled his first vision of her, and fairylike memories flitted through his brain like a swarm of golden butterflies. Was she more beautiful than Geneviève? He could not answer, but he knew well that thoughts associated with the personality of Geneviève were impossible in the atmosphere of Amélie, for not only was she different from the miller's daughter, but from all women he had known. Only on cameos, medallions, rare miniatures and enamelled boxes had he beheld her patrician type of beauty. Her eyes, tenderly imperious and her lips of regal sweetness never failed to quicken in him an adoring mood.

So great was his infatuation that he did not seek to ascertain her origin, for she seemed to have descended from heaven. One circumstance, however, forced itself on his attention, namely that while the miller's daughter treated Amélie as a companion, Adhemar himself evinced toward her a deference which closely approached reverence.

"She is the daughter," he would say, "of persons who protected me during my exile."

How sweet had been those days! He recalled the walks during the summer along the river bank

fringed with lilies and reeds and shaded by the languid foliage of willows, her arm intertwined in his, their feet moving rhythmically together; and then the return home in the moonlight with the perfume of honey-suckle and wild mint in their faces. In his ravishment he failed to note the satirical remarks and jealous glances of Geneviève. His eyes were for Amélie only who, pale at first like a wilted rose, rapidly recovered health and animation. What most captivated him was her air of distinction, her native dignity, her manners of a *grande dame*, so unaccountable in a girl of obscure origin. He said to himself that, compared with Amélie, the arrogant Duchess de Rousillon, his mother, was a woman most ordinary, almost vulgar.

It was not long before the news spread throughout the district that the Marquis de Brezé, the best match in the country, was to wed a young foreign girl of low extraction who had, in charity, been given an asylum at the mill. The Duchess de Rousillon was absent in Paris at the time, for the purpose of securing from the government of the Restoration the return of properties confiscated during the Reign of Terror.

One morning as the young Marquis was tranquilly sleeping, dreaming, perhaps, of his fair

mination to persist in his love for the stranger girl. Then it was that, like a bomb exploding at his feet, these ominous words fell from the lips of the Duchess:

"It would be insanity in the Marquis de Brezé to bestow his name on the daughter of a mechanic by occupation, a vagabond without lineage, of tainted blood, an adventurer who has roamed over Europe, supported in his youth by a woman of middle age whom there is good reason to suppose was his mistress. I knew well these particulars, dear son of mine, and you may imagine how they harassed me, but I rebuked myself, saying that dignity and morality might exist in the humblest rank. Still, as those who are not blinded by love must ascertain facts, I investigated the situation and obtained these corroborating documents. You will admit that my course has not been one of capricious obstinacy. Listen. The father of your idol, by name Naundorff, seems to be of Jewish extraction. His past is sullied by grave felonies. Here is the deposition of the burgomaster of Spandau and letters from other Prussian authorities—a formal conviction, in fact. As an incendiary, he set fire to the city theatre, as a counterfeiter, he manufactured sackfuls of coins, which, when caught in the act, he

flung into the river Spree. He expiated his flagitious acts by serving in the penitentiary of Alstadt the sentence imposed by a German court. Now you know the truth and if you still desire to unite the Naundorff blazonry with the unblemished arms of Brezé, glorious with crusader trophies, you are free to do so. I cannot restrain you. If I could, I should. I have discharged my duty in warning you. You cannot allege ignorance. And now, René, leave me. I trust soon to know whether the heir of Rousillon lives or whether I must mourn his passing."

This was the speech which the young Marquis had, earlier in the evening, abridged and modified before Amélie. And now, living over again the scene at the trellis, he felt that she would not forgive him and, nevertheless, that he could not live without her. Knightly honor, family pride, the obligations of nobility—all were impotent in combating his love for the fascinating, imperious girl.

Chapter III

THE ASSAULT

TELLING himself that he was reprehensively weak in failing to resist his passion, René gazed out upon the river. He reflected that its dark surface had closed over many human sorrows and perplexities which seemed beyond alleviation. A chill crept over him, then a dizziness, as he gazed into the glistening, alluring current of the Thames.

In such situations, the slightest whisper is enough to break the spell. The Marquis started on beholding two men emerge from a noisome alley, conversing in French. When abroad, our native tongue always claims our attention, especially when one using it happens to pronounce a familiar name. These men twice spoke the name of Amélie's father, whereupon René stealthily followed the pair. He could not distinguish the topic of their conversation but was quite close enough to study the physical type of each of the suspicious characters, one of whom was close-

shaven, coarse and short of stature, the other tall, full-bearded, alert and enveloped in a huge overcoat which concealed half his face. They walked slowly, peering at intervals in all directions. On perceiving René, they nudged each other, for the Marquis's fine clothes were out of keeping with the place, which was the thoroughfare of dissolute and disorderly sailors. They ceased talking and, a few moments later, suddenly turned a corner and disappeared in the labyrinth of malodorous, ill-lighted alleys. René realized that they had eluded him, but his hunter's scent and nimble legs put him again upon their trail. Why this espionage? He could scarcely have answered had he been questioned.

When he next perceived them, they were standing beneath the yellow lantern of a tavern. He saw them enter the filthy place, order some glasses of beer, which they gulped down like genuine Londoners and make their exit. Guardedly he followed them into the wider and better-lighted streets, through which rolled an occasional cab. Again they described a capricious curve, descended towards the river and emerged upon the park which faced the small house and garden—the scene of René's colloquy with Amélie. On noting the coincidence, his heart beat fast and the move-

ment was quickened when he perceived that the wily couple were ambuscading back of the great trees in the centre of the square. Connecting the name he had twice heard spoken by the ruffians—for so he classified them—with the place of their concealment, he conjectured that an act was about to be perpetrated which would affect Amélie, an act in which he must interpose, whether impelled by fate or chance. He crept into the zone of shade cast by the dense foliage, his gray cloak blending in color with the walls and making him almost invisible.

The park remained deserted. The night grew darker each moment and the silence was broken only by the solemn striking of the church clock or the impatient step of a laborer returning homeward. Just as the hour of nine struck, a man appeared from that side of the park opposite the spot where René was watching. As he entered, walking leisurely, the two concealed men stepped forth and with a preconcerted movement placed themselves, the one on the stranger's right, the other on his left. René had scarcely realized what had occurred when the assault began. A few vigorous leaps brought him quickly to the assistance of the victim just as the assailants were about to deliver their blows. He seized the uplifted arm of the

more threatening one, the tall man with the great coat, whose intended cudgel-blow was thereby made harmless.

The stranger, having no other weapon than a cane, rained blows upon the enemy until he wrenched himself loose and fled. René then turned upon the accomplice, seized him by the throat with both hands and gradually tightened his hold until the man's face was purple from strangulation. Then he released him, but, suddenly feeling a sharp sensation in his shoulder, he renewed his grasp, maintaining the pressure until the villain fell inert, dropping his weapon. The assaulted man quickly seized the Marquis by the arm and dragged him toward the house, saying in a voice full of emotion:

"Come, let us hasten. If the police detect us, we are lost."

He spoke in French with a German accent.

"I cannot," said René staggering. "I am wounded and too weak to walk."

Throwing his arms around René in order to sustain him, the stranger conducted him to his home, rapping three times in a peculiar manner upon the door, which was then opened by a woman of attractive form and features and apparently

about thirty-five years of age. She shrieked on beholding the condition of the two men.

"'Tis a wounded gentleman, Jeanne—wounded in defending me," said the stranger in an authoritative voice. "Close the door securely and help me to examine his wounds."

The woman obeyed, leaving her lamp on a stand, and aided her husband in placing René upon a lounge in the room next the entrance. Not till then did she dare to whisper:

"And you, Charles Louis; has any ill befallen you?"

"Nothing but a slight scratch on the elbow. Quickly bring some water, ether, balsam and court-plaster and linen. Call Amélie. She is courageous."

While Jeanne hastened to execute these commands, Charles Louis unfastened René's outer garments, also his close-fitting jacket, removing the lace-trimmed shirt soaked in blood and disclosing a wound near the left shoulder-blade, the ruffian's dagger having been aimed for a dangerous lung thrust. His weakness was due entirely to loss of blood, which, continuing to flow, had left a dark, clotted stain on his white skin. When Jeanne returned with the restoratives, René was smiling tranquilly. A girl in white entered the

apartment, holding a wax taper and, upon recognizing René, pale, blood-stained and nude to the waist, she uttered a cry of terror and dropped the light.

"What is the matter, Amélie?" asked her father. "Do not be alarmed, my daughter. Thank God that our unknown friend is no longer in danger. Come nearer and hold the light still a moment. Now the bandage. Bring one of my shirts, also my great-coat and a glass of cognac or a little coffee."

"Do not trouble yourselves further. I am doing well," declared the wounded man. "At the Hotel Douglas I have changes of clothing."

René's eyes passionately sought those of Amélie, which, dilated with terror, could not unfasten themselves from his face.

The host insisted: "It is too late to go to the Hotel. The streets, as we have seen, are dangerous. Accept, then, for a little while the clothes of a humble artisan, Monsieur—?"

"René de Giac, Marquis de Brezé."

"Charles Louis Naundorff," said the host introducing himself. "And these are my wife and daughter. Will you believe me when I say that I knew you were a Frenchman when you sprang to my defense?"

On hearing that René had protected her father, Amélie approached her lover and gave him a look that was all radiance, an abandon of the soul, an unconditional surrender. It lasted but a moment. Had it been prolonged, it would have melted the heart of the man who, not long before, meditated a leap into the Thames.

"To be a Frenchman and to be a hero from choice are mutual corollaries. You did not know me. Why, then, should you risk your life? Thus is my debt of gratitude to you increased," said Naundorff, smiling.

Amélie had brought Réne a cup of coffee which, having the effect of a cordial, made him talkative.

"A half hour since, the bandits and I were concealed in the park; an hour since, I started on their trail."

"Is it possible?"

"It is indeed. Listen and judge. I wandered aimlessly along the river bank and soon overheard two men speaking French. They were suspicious-looking characters and they spoke your name twice. On perceiving that I followed, they fled. I caught up with them and again followed cautiously. On reaching the park, they ambuscaded. The rest you know."

Naundorff gazed attentively at his guest who,

having clothed himself in the borrowed garments, was fast recovering his strength. He strove to read René's face. At last he said:

"Why, then, you knew me?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I knew you by name, and now that I look at you closely, I feel that I know your face also. You have one of those countenances which always seem familiar and linger in the memory. I cannot say when or where I have seen you, but I believe it has been not once but a thousand times. When I opened my eyes and looked upon your face, it seemed to me that long ago I had known you well."

On first beholding his fiancée's father, de Brezé had experienced a feeling that now returned with renewed force. Although love confiscates all sentiments, in order to focus them on the adored one, René gazed beyond Amélie as he spoke, having eyes only for Charles Louis. The father's age seemed near forty, his head was of spacious front with arched brow and blond hair, somewhat silvered and curling naturally. An infantile dimple marked his chin, his breast-bone was high and a slight obesity marred his form which still, however, preserved graceful outlines; his hands were finely patrician; his expression was a mingling of dignity, bitterness and deep distrust.

Great sorrows must have been the lot of this man, for his face seemed furrowed by torrents of tears. His likeness to Amélie seemed to consist more in what is usually called family resemblance than in physical similitude. The father and daughter were of distinct types and yet it seemed impossible to disjoin them mentally. More and more perplexed, René said to himself, "Where have I seen this man? Where have I seen him and Amélie together?"

Chapter IV

AMÉLIE

NAUNDORFF, seated near the sofa where René rested, had become pensive. René's eyes were fastened querulously upon him. The young man scarcely knew what to say, yet his good breeding impelled him to end the enforced visit.

"I have almost recovered. I therefore beg of my kind host permission to depart. I shall take a cab near by in Wellington street and so reach my hotel in twenty minutes. Tomorrow, unless fever seizes me, I shall give myself the pleasure of calling upon you to learn how you fare after our rough experience. There remains now only to inquire whether you deem it advisable to report this assault, Monsieur Naundorff, in order that the scoundrels may receive their just deserts."

This very natural query was disquieting to the host, and with contracted lips, he objected:

"Make report? No, no. I would suffer everything rather than appeal to human justice. Leave

human justice to her caverns, her lairs. I prefer to deal with the malefactors who all but made off with us. At least,'' he added excitedly in a hoarse voice, "at least they strike blows and dispatch their victims. Oh, deliver me from prolonged martyrdom, from shredding of flesh fibre by fibre Let the end come speedily and then—rest. The justice of God is retributive, infallible."

At this point Amélie arose and threw herself into her father's arms, while Jeanne buried her face n her hands. René observed that the wife was not really included in the demonstration and that Naundorff and Amélie constituted a group of attuned souls. As she drew herself from her father who kissed her fair forehead, she turned to René and said serenely:

"Monsieur Marquis de Brezé, we have complied to the extent of our power with the obligations of hospitality and gratitude. We owe you an eternal debt. On leaving, you shall carry with you my father's pistols, which he imprudently refuses to carry himself, notwithstanding numerous evidences of treachery. But before you leave, I wish to hear my father vindicate himself."

She made a significant gesture to Naundorff, who then said gently to his wife:

"Jeanne, my own, go and see if the children are

sleeping. Don't let them know what has happened to-night."

Jeanne complied with a smile. Amélie then resumed the conversation with her usual vivacity.

"Without detracting from our gratitude, Marquis, permit me to say that friendship must be based upon esteem. If you do not esteem my father according to his deserts; if, on saving his life through a noble impulse, you fail to profess for him a respect which is his due, we shall perpetuate our gratitude but withhold our hospitality in the future, unless some day you call upon us, to demand the life to which your conduct tonight entitles you. This is my attitude, Monsieur, and my father's also."

"What do you mean, my daughter?" interposed Naundorff.

"The Marquis understands me," replied the girl, lowering her eyes. "He will admit that I speak with warrant."

Naundorff, with unfeigned amazement gazed from one to the other. The heightened color in both young faces revealed the truth.

"Monsieur le Marquis, have you had previous acquaintance with my daughter?"

"I have had that honor, Monsieur Naundorff,

at the house of Elois Adhemar, miller on my patrimonial estate."

"What has been the nature of the friendship which you have entertained for the Marquis?" asked Naundorff of Amélie. "I do not need to urge you to speak the truth."

"Indeed you do not my father. René de Giac was my lover, pledged to be my husband. He is," she observed, as though the detail were of extreme importance, "a scion of the first nobility of France."

"Compose yourself, my daughter," said Naundorff, for her voice had suddenly quavered with emotion. "To love is law. Your father has loved intensely. Your lover is worthy of you."

"That is what remains to be proved," she replied haughtily. "That is what Monsieur le Marquis will demonstrate without delay. We wait—"

René was amazed at her intrepidity and he answered with some vehemence:

"Mademoiselle wounds but does not offend. She will testify that I have reverenced her honor, that it has been as sacred to me as that of a beloved sister. And in vindication, I now improve the present occasion to address my plea to her father.

Monsieur Naundorff, the Marquis de Brezé asks for the hand of your daughter."

Astounded, then thrilled with happiness, Naundorff turned to his daughter, who interrupting, calmly said:

"Do not concede it, my father, until the Marquis retracts."

René understood. His fealty indicated his line of procedure. Turning to Naundorff, he said:

"I retract, not because Amélie demands that I should but because my conscience so dictates. In France I had been assured that you had been imprisoned as an incendiary and counterfeiter and that you had served your term in Silesia at hard labor. Two hours since, I said this to Amélie. Since meeting you, I am convinced that the charge is false Forgive me and take my hand."

A melancholy cloud settled upon Naundorff's face and a spasm of pain convulsed his features. From his eyes darted a lustre like that of congealed tears. Losing all control of himself, he shrieked:

"Do not take my hand. What they told you in France is true. I have been dragged before tribunals under the accusation of firing a theatre and counterfeiting money. Yes, I have ground

gypsum in the prison of Alstadt. You have not been deceived, Monsieur le Marquis."

Amélie, sobbing and on her knees, caressed her father passionately. René vacillated for a moment and then intuition vanquished reason.

"Your hand, Monsieur Naundorff," he said, extending his own. "If you refuse, it is because *you* doubt *me*. I feel convinced that those accusations are part of an iniquitous scheme. My heart so speaks and my heart does not lie. The Marquis de Brezé, of immaculate honor, responds for the honor of Naundorff."

Not his hand but both of his arms did Naundorff extend to this new friend whom he embraced impetuously.

"Not only are you innocent of felony," said René, "but, moreover, a man persecuted, calumniated, victimized. From today you have at your side an unconditional friend. I will make your reputation to shine as the sun. Trust yourself to me."

Naundorff shook his head sadly.

" 'Tis not in you power to change my fate. Tired of long suffering, I determined to leave everything to chance. Living obscurely, humbly, poorly, I thought that, being forgotten, tranquillity was at last to be permitted me. What evil had I done? Of what might I be accused?

May I not even enjoy the love of my family and the peace of the laborer's hearth ? No, they have decreed my assassination as they decreed my dishonor. Today you have saved me, my friend, but you will not always be near and if you dare to place yourself between me and my fate, alas for you! A voice prophetic and awful pronounced to me, one day, these words in the darkness of my dungeon: 'Your friends shall perish.' "

Amélie fell into an armchair, sobbing.

"Do not weep, rose of heaven," said Naundorff, leading her toward René. "Divine providence permits at last that you shall be happy. My dream was to see you the wife of a French nobleman. He whom you love is noble in birth and noble in soul. Love one another. Charles Louis blesses you."

"No," protested René. "We shall not marry until you are rehabilitated. Amélie would not consent." Amélie extended her hand in approval.

"Not until my father recovers his name and honor may we be happily married, René."

"Do as you will," murmured Naundorff. "I will not again buffet Fate, knowing in advance that I shall fall a victim."

He made a signal to the Marquis, who followed him into the basement of the house. It was a

species of work-shop, illumined by the dim light of a lantern hanging from the smoky ceiling. On benches were scattered the implements of a watch-maker—springs, pincers, bridges, wires, minute tongs, unmounted watches, others in cases, machinery of various kinds and fire-arms. Naundorff double-locked the door and then, removing one of the tables, counted the bricks in the wall and, reaching the fifteenth numbering from the floor, he pried it out. A secret compartment was now revealed from which he took a yellow parchment and a small square box with a gold key hanging from it.

"René de Giac," said Naundorff solemnly, "I confide this treasure to your unblemished honor. Herein is contained the last gleam of hope for me and my children. To no one have I delivered this manuscript and casket because my misfortunes have driven away all my friends, a result to be expected from the prediction heard within my prison walls. There have been moments in which I have thought to throw these proofs into the fire, for they seemed valueless, but tonight's episode has put an end to such an inclination. As I do not attain peace by living obscurely; as a dagger continues to be suspended over my head; as my sorrows flood the life of Amélie, my best-loved

child—the only being who knows my secret; since, contrary to my desire, I am compelled to defend my rights, I resume the struggle. I shall secretly go to France and if you consider that the testimonials enclosed in that box constitute a solid basis for my claims before a French tribunal, or even before a human tribunal, then I shall proceed to my demands. No longer will I remain silent. But listen to my warning. From the very moment you possess the box and parchment, do not consider yourself safe on earth. Tremble, keep vigils, start in your sleep, trust no man. Treachery will bristle on all sides and spies will track you, to despoil you of the treasure. You look at me amazed and, perhaps, doubt my sanity, but reflect on the assault of this night. You will not wonder at my warnings when you read the manuscript. 'Tis a plea addressed to a woman, to her whom I have most loved on earth, excepting my mother and daughter—a woman upon whom may God have pity! After you have read it, judge whether or no it should be placed in her hands and, if it should, be you the bearer, that the woman may not say she sinned through ignorance.

"As for this casket containing the important documents," he added, "conceal it in a crypt

beneath French soil or in the bowels of the earth. A time will come when we shall have need of it. Until then, let not your right hand know where the left has hidden it."

"I swear!" said de Brezé, "that no man shall track me."

"Transform yourself, René. He who becomes my friend must adjust to his face a mask, must envelop himself in mystery—for I am a mystery, an abysmal mystery. Here are my pistols—they are loaded. And now farewell, for you must find a place of safety for these things which in my hands incur grave danger. I shall see you again in Calais where Amélie and I shall be one week from today, if all goes satisfactorily, at the Red Fish Inn. Let us not meet again in London, for we are watched."

"No divining rod shall indicate the cavity beneath French soil where I conceal this treasure," said de Brezé. "Permit me now, on leaving, to kiss my lady's hand."

"Go seek her. She is yours."

At eleven, René again crossed the solitary park. He approached the square, curious to see if there still remained evidences of the struggle. All was deserted, but a blade gleamed at the foot of a tree, and he took it up in his hand. It was a short, wide

knife such as mariners use for cutting fish. As he stooped, the casket dropped from his bosom and struck on the tree. Much alarmed, he replaced it inside his jacket which he securely buttoned and, pressing his hand to the treasure, he proceeded along Wellington street.

On passing a corner to call a cab, he caught sight of two men, those of the assault, shadowed in a great doorway and watching his movements.

"There goes the throttler," said the thick-set fellow, who still wheezed from the pressure of René's fingers.

"He carries a box," said the other. "It has a metallic sound and cannot be empty. Shall we fall on him and seize it?"

"Fool! he must be armed. If not, do you think I should let him pass?"

"He goes toward Wellington."

"Let's follow him now as he followed us. Let's find out who this young aristocrat is that drops from the skies into other men's fights."

And the two ruffians, creeping along in the shadow of the walls, tracked de Brezé until he leaped into a cab, giving directions which they overheard. The listeners did not need to incur the expense of another cab.

René had failed to heed the warning of

Naundorff regarding circumspection. Just from the arms of Amélie, he floated like one in a trance; his thoughts were all of love.

Chapter V

THE FIRST THREADS OF THE NET

THE office of the Superintendent of Police, Baron Lecazes, was an apartment severely sumptuous and furnished in the purest Imperialistic style. The power of the great Napoleon, laid low forever after the ephemeral sway of the Hundred Days, lived still in art. How could the suite of Lecazes be furnished otherwise, when it had been the official headquarters of Fouché, Napoleon's chief minister, the "Great Second" in power and, perhaps, behind the throne's draperies, the "Great First." He had occupied it during the stirring period in which the power of the police department attained its zenith,—Fouché, the only man who in reality knew the history of the epoch.

Lecazes was said to have reaped the harvest of his predecessor's ingenious policy—tangled labyrinths of tunnels, secret passages, back stairways, hidden closets, dungeons wherein dangerous citizens kept gloomy vigils while gagged and

fettered, awaiting presentation before the all-potent superintendent. There were chiffoniers and garde-robes whose compartments held every variety of disguises. Smothered voices, could they have become audible again, might have told of torture-galleries consummately fitted up, containing indented wheels, Austrian steel-blocks, English pricking-forks, Spanish weights and cords, Prussian metal helmets and other devices no less terrifying. The truth of these rumors cannot be vouched for but it is enough to say that they were disseminated by the Carbonari, whose society was then starting. It has also been said, perhaps rashly, that under the eye of Fouché there existed a chemical laboratory in which a turbaned doctor from the Orient, envoy from the Great Turk, concocted distillations of herbs which induced stupor, insanity or death. However legendary some of these statements may seem, however rash it may be to gainsay the erudite historians who give credit only to what is found in the records, it is well to recognize the fact that some of the most dramatic and highly significant happenings are among those of which all trace has been obliterated.

The private office of Lecazes was reached from the outside by an antechamber with apparently but one entry, that of the rear, leading to the hall

and before which hung a green silk portière brocaded in yellow palms. The walls of the office were covered with green silk laid on in squares and retained in place by carved gilt-edged mahogany strips. The floor was a mosaic of rare and variegated woods which in their natural tints formed a Grecian fret encircling a serpent-locked head of Medusa. There were swan-formed sofas and chairs and stools of artistically wrought brass, depicting processions of nymphs with airy coiffures, slender necks and beribboned sandals, or groups of cupids bearing hymeneal torches. A splendid bronze railing surrounded the desk on which stood an inkstand with the figure of Laocoon struggling in the coils of serpents. The Laocoon and the Medusa, strongly suggestive of martyrdom and despair, could not be more fittingly placed. Above the baron's seat, a canopy overhung the portrait of the reigning king, Louis XVIII. Lecazes was seated and although many papers lay before him, he was not busy. His attitude was meditative, his head resting in the left hand, while his right fingered a silver pen tipped with steel. It would have been difficult to classify the quality of his meditation—to determine whether it was artful or idle. His face was keenly intelligent and in public it expressed an

ingenious frankness, with an affability too unremitting to be sincere, and a smile half abstracted and half mellow, which, when in solitude was replaced by lines of astute and tenacious determination. It was the expression of a man who travels without deviation to his ends.

As superintendent of the restored monarch, he was impelled to display greater vigor than as the superintendent of the great Corsican. In the latter capacity he was guided by a superior genius; in the former he stood back of the throne to guard the government—including himself.

"What would become of them without me?" Lecazes asked himself, on the successful termination of a coup. "It is often necessary to act without consulting. There are questions which must not be asked. I am the contriver. I direct the play and they are the audience. Much cause for congratulation is it if I can prevent them and their vengeful partisans of the south from spoiling the plot."

The baron's reflections were not those of one who seeks a path amid thorns and thistles. They had, rather, to do with the balancing of probabilities and the best way to carry out his purpose. Suddenly he began to arrange the documents, some of which he tied together. After

extracting and reading a letter over and over, he placed that important paper in his pocket-book.

A project of much consequence agitated his mind, for his hand shook nervously as he took up his pen, and deep furrows lined his brow. Two clocks, standing upon artistic brackets at his right and left respectively, joined their crystalline voices in musical precision. It was two o'clock in the afternoon—time to stop reflecting and go to acting. He struck the bell and inquired of the attendant, who immediately appeared:

"What person waits?"

"Professor Beauliège is in the anteroom."

"Show him in."

A moment later there appeared a man who was a type of the literary-scientific proletariat, such as may always be found in Parisian bookstores, lingering before shelves containing antique works marked at extravagant prices. A greasy looking hat, uncombed hair, coat collar soiled with dandruff, tattered gloves pierced by dirty fingernails, a faded portfolio (apparently full of manuscripts) beneath his arm; a shaven face with a peaked nose and myopic eyes which seemed to peer through a dusty web—such were the unpleasing features of Monsieur Beauliège's exterior.

The baron, scarcely looking up, motioned him

to a seat. Active and practical himself, he professed for littérateurs a disdain which he made no effort to conceal.

"How does the book come on?" he asked.

"Monsieur le Baron," faltered the poor old fellow, "I make little advance because, as you are well aware, I absolutely lack basis. I have no corroborating documents for establishing the boy's demise. I am in ignorance of what transpired during the latter part of his imprisonment and my labor is most arduous since, thanks to the spirit of the age, history seems to be taking on new methods and insisting on indisputable evidences. When I received your summons, I jumped for joy, for I thought you had important documents to entrust to me."

"Monsieur Beauliège" replied Lecazes, in slightly repressed irony, "if we possessed the papers that you wish, we should have no need of you. Le diable! In that case I should transfer them to the columns of Le Moniteur. What I expect of your genius and erudite pen is a compilation—do you follow me?—a compilation of, well, of materials conjectural and plausible, tender, affecting, poetic, descriptive of the unhappy prince's life in prison. The theme is pregnant. You have a virgin field and an ample horizon.

You are not asked for a romance. Beware! You must bring forth a historic revelation to serve as a beacon for the future. 'Tis an enterprise which, above all, if believed to have been spontaneously undertaken, will redound to your literary glory. A seat in the Academy shall not be deemed too lofty an honor by way of reward for your distinguished merit."

The word "Academy" caused the savant to leap from his seat and grasp the railing. Lecazes eyed him astutely. This man was not purchasable in money. He had wisely held to him the bait of literary eminence.

"A book of your writing, Monsieur Professeur, does not require much help from documentary evidence, since your personal authority is sufficient. It might, if you were one of those fools who invent narratives having neither head nor tail, but the fact of your being a scholar and a collector of historical manuscripts imparts the strength of credibility to your productions. The test of your ability shall consist in imparting stability to a monument without a pedestal. We have unfortunately lost the pedestal."

"I am told," said the professor, "that there exists in the Hospital for Incurables a woman capable of throwing light on this chapter of history.

She is the widow of the shoemaker who tortured the wretched little prince. I have decided to interview this woman."

The baron's fist dealt the table a fearful blow.

"With what instrument must I inject into your brain the idea that you are to interview nobody except the person or persons to whom I direct you? Is your book to be the recital of old women's garrulities or a dignified exposition?"

The savant drooped his head. The magic charm of membership in the Academy constrained him into a meek submission. Nevertheless, he timidly stammered:

"If only I might possess the death certificate! Resting upon that solitary document, the book would have a basis of adamant. It would suffice to refute conclusively those vile impostors, the cobbler of Rouen, the lackey of Versailles, and the mechanic of Prussia."

Lecazes again assumed his habitual smile in order to restrain himself from flinging the Laocoön inkstand at the savant's head,—the old imbecile, seeking Jerusalem artichokes in the depths of the sea! Then he amiably remonstrated:

"Refrain, my dear Professor, from desiring such evidence, or—renounce your seat in the Academy. You must convince yourself that the afore-

said death certificate has not yet been unearthed, and that it is not yet expedient to record the facsimile. But what does this matter to a sage like yourself?"

Gliding his hand into his pocket, the superintendent extracted a roll of banknotes.

"This insignificant sum is not intended as payment for your labor but only as a reimbursement for expenses incidental to the mechanical part of your task. In two weeks I shall expect the manuscript, may I not?"

An authoritative gesture dismissed the Professor, who retired in an absorbed mental condition, for already he had begun framing his initiatory address on entering the Academy. Lecazes glanced at the clock. The hands indicated twenty-five minutes of three.

"Volpetti has doubtless arrived," he said to himself and then rising, he took up the package of papers which had recently been collected and pressed a finger upon a hidden spring back of his chair, whereupon one of the panels swung open, revealing a dark, narrow passageway, at the farther end of which there was an iron shutter. Entering, he touched this lightly with his knuckles and no sooner had it rolled upward than a man's

voice hoarsely whispered from the opened room:

"I am here, Excellency."

The chamber which the baron entered was furnished in mahogany, the walls painted to match, and the floor was covered with a cheap carpet. It lacked windows and was ventilated only by the stovepipe. A lantern was suspended from the ceiling and he quickly turned it upon the individual who had announced himself.

"Lower the shutter," ordered the baron, and the man obeyed, closing the chamber's only exit.

"Now bring cup and salver."

The man took from the cupboard a deep bronze cup with handles representing two sirens of protruding bosom. Unstopping a bottle, he emptied its contents into the cup and then, striking a flint, ignited a taper which he applied to the liquid. He then placed the cup on the stove. A blue flame arose, and in it the baron lighted, one by one, the documents he had just been handling at his desk. He watched the burning sheets as they turned to black crumpled shapes and then to shapeless ashes upon the metal salver. The odor from the burning seals was wafted to his face and a slight shiver came over him. He was enjoying his power of obliterating history, cunningly causing past happenings to seem as though

they had not been. Feeling relieved at the destruction of the papers, he said amiably to Volpetti:

"When you are again here, 'twill be because *that* has been accomplished."

Chapter VI

THE BAILIFF

THE man to whom those significant words were addressed, and whom the baron called Volpetti, appeared to have just arrived after a long journey. Much dust whitened his clothes, his shoes and his abundant dark hair, which last was in a disorderly condition. He seemed somewhat over thirty, of a southern type, having tanned skin and a heavy beard which extended almost to his eyes. His answer was formal:

"*That* shall be accomplished tonight."

"Are you certain?"

"Infallibly so. The fool is in clever hands. I am just from London, bringing two boxes of steel implements, scissors and knives, which have served to corroborate my commercial character. Beyond the Channel I was Albert Serra, a Catalan, making purchases in London to smuggle through Gibraltar. Not the devil himself could have spotted me."

"Come to the point," commanded the superin-

tendent. "You are skillful in disguises. I myself hardly recognize you in that beard and mop of hair."

"I have taken these precautions, Excellency, because the Carbonari and the police are on my scent. They are making shrewd guesses and 'twould be very awkward for me to enter London in handcuffs, on the charge of being party to an assault upon that puzzling personage. One must be on the qui vive. I picked out two hardy fellows and gave them only such information as was required for the performance of their parts. Besides, the plan was as simple as sucking eggs. The personage lives in an obscure quarter and opposite his house is a park which is always deserted after nightfall. A Methodist church stands on one side of this park and a college on another. In the centre is a group of big trees which cast a deep shade; indeed, everything was arranged to suit us. The personage takes an evening stroll after his day's work, for he has been warned that failure to take the air will be bad for his eyes which he uses hard all day, looking at the fine mechanism of the watches and machines which he repairs. How have I found all this out? Therein lies my genius, Excellency. I can answer every question concerning that house. The per-

sonage, after wandering through certain streets, and visiting his friends, the Prussian mechanic, Hartzenbaume, returns home regularly at a given hour. He is very punctual in his habits and whoever passes through the square at that time is almost sure to meet him.

The superintendent shook his head. The faint creases upon his brow deepened.

"And if they are captured?"

"If they are captured? but they will *not* be captured. They know just what to do. If they are arrested, 'twill be for assault with intent to rob, something that occurs every day. And even though Albert Serra is named as accomplice, what of that? The English police will look for a Catalan smuggler—not for me. The fellows know only half the story and you may be certain that the net is well laid. Has your Excellency further orders for me?"

"Await me here and arrange a new make-up. I shall return."

The bailiff bowed and, at a signal, raised the iron shutter through which the autocrat passed back to his private office. On reaching it, he felt in his pocket for the letter which he had placed there not long since, and said to the usher:

"Has not her Grace, the Duchess de Rousillon, arrived?"

"She has been waiting some time for your Excellency."

"Ask her to be good enough to enter."

The baron gallantly advanced to place a chair for the lady. She approached boldly, trying to smile, but her pale face and the reddened semicircles beneath her blue eyes revealed acute suffering. The duchess must have been beautiful in her prime and her style of dressing showed that she had not given up her claim to attractiveness. Her skirt was of taffeta silk ornamented with narrow lace ruffles. She wore an exquisite dulleta of rare green velvet, bordered with white embroidery mingled with gold and chenille, a large silk English bonnet of such shape as to permit the escape on each side of clusters of curls still golden. A parasol like that which had been last graced by the hand of the Duchess de Barri, of white satin embroidered in violets, completed her outfit. From her left wrist hung a reticule of pearls over satin with a jeweled clasp. She made a court bow to Lecazes and seated herself in the proffered chair with somewhat more than her usual aristocratic manner.

"In what can I serve your Grace?"

"If you but knew what has happened," she began in an agonized voice. To his querulous look, she resumed: "You had appointed today for the conference which we were to hold regarding the Montereux mines, which form part of the ducal estate of Rousillon. The possession of this property is disputed by the municipality of Montereux on the pretext of prior occupation, and I desire to place my claim in your hands for enforcement, even though it be a matter that does not concern you officially. But if it were not for this engagement with you, I should have come today to earnestly solicit an audience."

The baron noted her agitation from the trembling of the rich jewels on her bosom.

"Compose yourself," he said almost affectionately, taking in his own one of her gloved hands "Your trouble may not be as serious as you imagine."

"You consider me capable of being afflicted over a trifle!" she exclaimed. "Listen; my son has escaped to England."

"To England!" ejaculated Lecazes, starting in his seat.

"Ah! so you see my distraction is not over a small matter. Yes, to London and slyly, too, for he told me that he was going hunting on

Picmort. But as I have eyes, I discovered that the clothes which he had taken were hardly appropriate to the chase and that the guns and bags which were left behind satirically grinned at each other. I then hurried to our bankers and indifferently inquired whether René had ordered money to be sent to him. On being told that a large credit had been placed for him in London, I concluded that my presentiments were well founded."

"When did the Marquis leave?"

"Four days ago. He should reach London tonight."

The baron was not in the habit of showing his feelings, and only a slight contraction of the mouth could be detected as the effect of his chagrin.

"You know well," proceeded the lady, "that the girl is there. When I revealed the truth to him and proved it by the documents which you kindly procured for me—showing her father's criminal record—René seemed overwhelmed with sadness. After some grieving over his ruined hopes, he appeared to be cured of his absurd passion. But now I realize that the chains are not broken."

The superintendent brusquely inquired:

"Why did you not notify me the moment that your son started on his trip?"

"I blundered," she mournfully admitted. "I did not realize that precautions are unavailing when one contends with intrigants of low breed. Why do you not have that monstrous impostor put in prison? He should be deprived of his mischief-making power. I trust to you, Baron, to dispel from his Majesty's mind any notion that I am implicated in this conspiracy. Assure him of my loyalty, of my condemnation of René's perversity. How iniquitous so to exploit a resemblance, a freak of Nature! 'Tis truly an amazing likeness. On seeing the girl I was almost petrified. She has the air, the face, the eyes, the mouth and even the gait of the martyr-queen. Mountebanks of that stripe always attract followers. Adhemar, for one, believes in him to the death. I shall banish him from the mill for his treason! O Baron, rescue René! If my son were to become a partisan of this impostor, I could not endure his Majesty's displeasure. Were I treated coldly at court, I should die of mortification. Reverence for my liege is my chief sentiment. My beloved husband used often to say to me, 'Matilde, let your first care be to please the king!'"

"That is not the question at present," drily rejoined the superintendent. "Your fidelity is

evident to me. But what a mistake you made in not keeping me better posted."

"Do you fear, as do I, a clandestine marriage--one of those entanglements—?"

"Like that of his Highness, Duke Ferdinand, with the sentimental Amy Brown?" interposed Lecazes.

"Mon Dieu, no!" protested the duchess. "That was a vicious calumny."

"Well, your Grace, I shall try to nullify your mistakes. Compose yourself and depart. Pardon my abruptness. I require time to formulate plans and to prevent further trouble. Trust to me. The Marquis de Brezé will not rush headlong into marriage with a culprit's daughter. Such acts are not perpetrated in real life, impromptu, as in Cimarosa's operas. We shall find preventives for such an awkward faux pas."

The lady rose, drawing across her eyes a perfumed lace handkerchief.

"You are my protector," she said, clasping the baron's hand. To herself she said, "Trickster! Newly manufactured noble! Renegade Bonapartist!"

As soon as the duchess had departed, Lecazes clenched his fist and shook it vigorously in her direction. Then again placing a finger on the

secret spring, he glided through the paneled door and passageway into the room where he had burned the documents. He called, in a low voice, to Volpetti.

Some moments later, the bailiff appeared in immaculate dress of the correct style, blue coat with gilded buttons, nankeen breeches, riding-boots and in his hand a fancy whip with carnelian handle. He wore a white muslin cravat which with his pale face made a pleasing contrast with the dark brown whiskers. His head was fringed with chestnut ringlets, amid which rose, on the left, the romantic tupé, the Chateaubriand coiffure. And Volpetti did strikingly resemble the author of the Genius of Christianity.

"You certainly have an amazing facility in transforming yourself," said the superintendent. "There now remains only a cloak for the road. Take two passports and make use of that which is the more appropriate. Spare no expense and reach London without losing a moment."

"Will your Excellency be so good as to give me definite instructions? Am I sent to spy upon my agents?"

"Your business is to dog the steps of the Marquis de Brezé and to discover his lodging, his acts, his thoughts and even the frequency of his heart-beats.

This young gentleman is enamored of Naundorff's daughter and he reaches London this evening. He will doubtless, on arriving, take the road leading to his mistress. He may be Naundorff's ally, yes, he may be his rescuer this very night. We did not count on his presence and, to say the least, it complicates matters. Volpetti, there is no need to give you further instructions."

The bailiff bowed and departed, while the superintendent unfastened his coat, took out the letter which he had withheld from the flames, leisurely unfolded it and again lost himself in its perusal as though he were committing it to memory.

Chapter VII

THE EPICUREAN

WERE the superintendent's office compared with the monarch's sanctum, the former would appear to be more ostentatious, but on deliberately examining the latter, much that was admirable, indicating the cultured tastes of the occupant, would be found. The windows opened toward the royal gardens which spread before the eye, like a rich tapestry, its beds of rare flowers and shrubbery, among which could be seen alabaster statues of Grecian deities glistening in the sunlight. Within, the walls were covered with paintings both modern and antique, and splendid armorial trophies from the East. Among the paintings were a nude in pearly tints by Titian, a Bacchante by Rubens, an Odalisque by Delacroix, and a Jupiter and Ganymede by Prudhon. There were fancy china-pieces of Saxon ware encased in glass, Grecian statuettes, bas reliefs in which consummate skill triumphed over crudity of subject, silver-plate ornately engraved, medallions, coins,

pottery and jewels, many of these rarities being the treasures of an antiquarian connoisseur.

Back of the armchair and desk, which were superb specimens of Louis Quinze furniture, stood a book-case richly paneled and containing among its choicest volumes, editions of Plantin and Manuce, bound in morocco and Spanish-American calf. On the right, back of the screen, which concealed it was a costly piano awaiting the touch of fingers that were wont to interpret its enchanting secrets.

Before the desk and at the feet of the armchair was spread—a present from the Countess Cayla—a white bearskin, upon which lay a diminutive dog with black mouth and silken hair, one of those cunning miniatures which today are a fad in France, but at that time were rarely seen.

It was near five o'clock when a side door opened and the king entered, supported, almost carried, by two attendants. The dog leaped for joy and covered the monarch's feet with caresses. Sighing deeply, his Majesty dropped into an easy-chair near a window. He suffered from a life-long malady, in spite of which an active spirit stirred within him. To look upon him made one quickly see the force of Marquis de Semonville's remark:

"How could one expect his Majesty to forgive his brother for walking?"

Having settled himself in the easy-chair, his bandaged legs and swollen feet propped with cushions, he took a pinch of snuff from a jeweled case and said: "Summon Baron Lecazes."

Awaiting the execution of his order, the king cast his eyes over the enchanting view from the open window. The western sky was like molten gold and, against this brilliant back-ground the sombre trees took on the look of bronze bas reliefs. The spraying fountains tossed up in dazzling glee myriads of fantastic aquiform flower-petals, charming the eye and cooling the atmosphere. A sweet, voluptuous peace pervaded the apartment, the garden perfume mingling with that of unfolding narcissuses and springtide hyacinths in jardinieres. It was with unfeigned delight that the royal personage sated his esthetic nature amidst these rich and varied offerings to the senses, and on such occasions he was given to saying to himself, as though he might never enjoy its like again:

" 'Tis an elysian hour. Let us lose none of its nectar."

Always lurking behind this sentiment was the conviction: "Life is brief, whatever the number of its days. A breathing, a striving, a sighing,

and then—who can tell? Eternal mystery."

Giving himself up to the play of his imagination, the king seemed to hear the onrushing and receding of the tides of human destiny through the centuries, now holding high, then sweeping to their fall, the splendors of earth's thrones and dynasties. Was he also to be soon submerged in those merciless tides and dashed about like a straw? O, before sinking into the deeps, how he wished to live and feel the complete man!—to have health and a day —and laugh to scorn all the fears of frail humanity.

"Were I but strong!" he at times exclaimed in rage. "Might I but love, suffer, weave into my life the thread of a romantic adventure. But this despicable body!—this diseased and impotent flesh!—"

His eyes wandered from the garden view to the objects of art around him. He enjoyed in them the fruition of artistic beauty rescued from voracious Time. They seemed to smile to him like the choicest friends. In these and such as these he found more real contentment than in aught else.

"I am very like an Athenian, or a Roman contemporary of Horace," he assured himself complacently. Correct lines and classic symmetry transported him so much that the vision was at times inspired within him of his own person

restored to health, with rich and virile blood coursing through his veins.

Suddenly his face grew haggard and his head fell on the back of the chair, a shadow obscuring his Bourbonic countenance, so like that of his decapitated brother, though it lacked the placid benevolence of that unfortunate monarch's face encircled in curls which terminated in a cue. In the reigning Louis's face that benevolent look was replaced by an expression of sordid indifference or of caustic irony.

The king's collapse had been caused by the sight of a man standing in the garden opposite the window, near the statue: "A wrestler preparing for the Combat." The man's keen eye was fixed upon the monarch. He was of a weazened type and might be of any age between eighty and ninety, for there is a limit beyond which the passage of time is not apparent in the human form. His head shone like burnished silver, his bristly eyebrows surmounted prophetic eyes and his knotty hands, upon which his chin was leaning, rested on a rough staff. His garb was that of the provinces —where tradition and superstition held sway and druids still sharpened the ax beneath the trees— loose gaskins, wooden shoes, woolen scarf and embroidered jacket over a white vest. As a whole

the attire was picturesque and the passers-by turned to gaze attentively at the old man, an ideal model for a painter wishing to personify the past.

The king, attracted by the strange figure, prolonged his stare, then suddenly turned his eyes upon the pompous usher and the Superintendent of Police, who advanced making a profound salutation.

After taking the seat designated by the monarch, Lecazes inquired solicitously:

"Does your Majesty improve in health?"

"The vulture does not tire of preying upon me. Believe me, Baron, the lives of all men make up equal totals. To reign, having disabled limbs, or to break stone, having nimble ones—'tis a balance. No, I am in error. To break stone, under such conditions, is preferable. After all, the breakers of stone can make love and be merry, while an invalid like me—Poor Zoe! poor Countess! 'Tis true that she and I adore genius and beauty. Who can deprive us of those joys?"

The baron's facial muscles assented.

"What of the English doctor?" he asked.

"Bah! the English doctor? Another instance of the Anglomania enslaving us! Have you ever witnessed inanity so grotesque as this servile imitation? And the claim that 'tis the English who

have imparted to the world the ideas of cleanliness and hygiene! The reign of the water, indeed! Have we forgotten the ablutions of the Greeks and Romans, their cult of health, their purifying hot baths? And the fad of eating meat raw bloody! I tell you it was the eating of beefsteak that set my gout rampant. The only commendable thing about the English is that they kicked the Corsican off the throne. But what is the news, Monsieur Superintendent?"

"The news is good, your Majesty. We have succeeded in collecting the rest of the dispersed documents pertaining to the Creole. All of these we have burned, in compliance with your Majesty's instructions. And a wise precaution it was, for they contained much that should be suppressed, such as letters from the Russian emperor and from Barras relating to the impostor—noxious papers, all of them."

"And what writing, except good poetry, is not noxious?" disdainfully inquired the king. "A perpetual conflagration should exist for the consuming of all private letters and documents. Continue the destruction. My desire is well known to you, namely, that only purely official documents remain after me. Spare not a page of confidences, intrigues or anything calculated to

embroil historians or encourage romanticists. To ashes with the whole! While the verses of the great poets, the Latins especially, exist, what matters it about other writing? Here is a Petrarch in antique vignettes which I secured yesterday. Crude, is it? Why, the devil, Excellency! There was no mock modesty in those days."

Lecazes smiled, remembering Talleyrand's epigram: "The King reads Horace in public and yellow-backs when alone."

"Your Majesty," said he, "ever discourses on the intellectual and the artistic—"

"Ever, ever," rejoined the flattered monarch. "It is this diversion alone that buoys me up in supporting the weight of the crown, for 'tis heavy, so heavy! Lecazes, I do not lie on roses. If 'twere not for madrigals—eh? The prettiest madrigal ever written to my sister-in-law, Marie Antoinette, was from my pen. Do you remember it? 'Twas of the zephyr and love. Not even Voltaire surpassed it. I ought to have devoted my life to the art of verse and not been obliged to desert the Muse in order to treat with those devilish emigrants who return from exile as they left, having learned nothing, forgotten nothing. The importunate creatures wish to obliterate the Red Terror with the White. They would return to

'86, and the guillotine, hang, drown, seeking only a fierce revenge. Such imbecility! One may take vengeance on an individual, but never on a nation. Do you follow me, Lecazes? The fools! They would be better royalists than the King himself."

The Superintendent was pleased at this apt epigram, heard then for the first time.

"They must be restrained," he said. "Between them and the Carbonari the throne totters."

The King turned his face with a look half quizzical, half contemptuous.

"Lecazes, you talk inanities. Do you think we are to last long enough for that? Do you believe in a future for us? Better that I repeat with my great-grandfather and Pompadour, 'After us, the deluge.' Had I ambition—You well know how foreign 'tis to my nature—"

Again Lecazes assumed the mellow expression, and again came to his mind words of Talleyrand, uttered many years earlier before Revolutions were dreamed of: "A king loves his crown."

"Were I ambitious," resumed the monarch, "I should now be contented. But ambition is puerile. I was not born for the throne but for art—highest art! Beauty sways my soul. Poetic art rather than the prerogatives of supreme rank

should have filled my life. You, who are also an artist, can understand how I am starved in my exalted station, not filled. Happiness is found in the refined pleasures of the imagination rather than in statecraft and pomp. What memory is my reign to perpetuate? I have been despoiled of the nation's conquests. I have acquired the crown by giving up thirty-six strong-holds and ten thousand cannon. Glory has turned her face and fled from me. Is the fault my own?"

The baron failed to reply and the King resumed:

"I do not know—not even *you* know—how great is my joy in discovering an antique cameo, a rare edition or an Italo-Grecian vase to add to my Iliad collection. But the exercise of power does not permit me to enjoy such pleasures tranquilly. Perhaps some day I shall enjoy reigning, but at the present time I long to seclude myself in the country, surrounded by my art collections and a few witty, erudite friends—above all, writers of verse. Those melodious youths adoring the moon from Our Lady's tower would be most entertaining if they were more deferential to the classics. I should indeed be happy in such a retreat. O how the pastoral life, eclogues and idyls allure me! I was born for the society of pagan philosophers beneath a Grecian sky and mine is a plain case of the

error of Destiny. Baron, commiserate me. I am most unfortunate."

"Is Your Majesty greatly tormented by your ailments?" inquired Lecazes with aptly simulated solicitude.

"Greatly so. I suffer the pains of one condemned to torture. How I am racked! As I said before, Baron, to break stone is preferable."

Lowering his voice, he added:

"You know that one of the calumnies floating here and there for my discomfiture is that I am satirical and given to discharging arrows of cynicism, quite indiscriminately, too. They say this because I am an appreciator of Voltaire and his exposé of the hypocrites of his day. I a cynic!—an unbeliever! Would that they could know what depths of faith and of tenderness are in my heart! It is not easy to be a pagan. Modern life stultifies the attempt. Behold in me an instance—"

The King suddenly ceased talking and motioned to the aged peasant outside who had not averted his piercing gaze.

"That man—"

"Yes, Your Majesty, what of that man?" answered Lecazes, with a frown. "That beggar? Does Your Majesty wish alms given him?"

"No, Baron. How does it happen that you, from whom nothing is hidden, do not know who that man is and what he wants?"

The superintendent's shoulders shrugged indifferently.

"Your Majesty, I *do* know. That man has been watched from the moment he set foot in Paris. It has been found that he is inoffensive and probably idiotic. He prays much and aloud. In times past he was a partisan of the good cause and he now prophecies strangely concerning Your Majesty. Such visionaries are plentiful during this tumultuous time. Are we to heed them all? He doubtless has some favor to ask."

"No, Baron, your sagacity is not up to the mark in this case. That man is not to be despised. I must see and hear him. Perhaps my fears are groundless, but they are so persistent that only reality can dissipate them. How persevering he is! Daily, almost hourly, he fixes his greenish eyes upon the palace. I see him from whatever window I look. He mesmerizes me. Call it caprice if you will, but I wish you to send for this man. I *must* see him. He has stood there for a fortnight. Perhaps he is a poor unfortunate wishing to have a word with the king."

"Does Your Majesty ask my advice in the matter or am I receiving a command?"

"A command."

"Then I leave Your Majesty, in order to execute the command."

"No, remain. I shall send for him myself. You are to listen to our interview and give me your opinion. If he be really daft, 'twill amuse us. He is sure to be interesting."

"He will no doubt wish to be left alone with Your Majesty."

"Perhaps so. Well, place yourself back of that screen. The dear Countess de Cayla often listens from there to fatuities which greatly amuse her. Do not reveal yourself, unless I call or foul play be attempted."

Chapter VIII

THE SEER

A FEW minutes later, the door opened to admit the imposing figure of the octogenarian, Martin. The king graciously motioned him to advance. He approached diffidently, a pale ray from the setting sun shining upon his face and lighting up a flaming mark across his breast. This was the red flannel scapula of the Heart of Jesus stamped with the words: "I shall reign."

"Come forward, my friend. Ask what you wish. We have seen you so often opposite the palace that we decided to attend to your request. Take a seat and do not be timid."

The monarch pointed to a tabouret, but the peasant did not heed the invitation. Glancing around the apartment, he suddenly noticed the voluptuous Pompeian lamp and then turned indignantly, almost threateningly, upon the king who, somewhat disconcerted—though he scarcely knew why—repeated:

"Ask what you wish."

"I ask for nothing," said the old man with emphasis. "I come not to implore from the king either honors or riches. I am sent by God to speak to your Royal Highness certain truths, to remind you of the past and to reveal to you the future. I come not of myself. I am the obscurest laborer in France, by name Martin. I live in a village of but twelve cottages. I am a Christian. I believe in our holy religion and our holy monarchy. When evil men rebelled against God and His earthly agent, my sword remained sheathed because to shed blood is forbidden. But I placed on my breast this Heart, that men might know that with my life I would maintain my faith."

"Good man, be seated," insisted the monarch.

"I have too great a reverence for your person to remain otherwise than standing. I should be kneeling, for so should I choose to honor the uncle and heir of my king."

"What do you mean? Am I not the king, himself?" And Louis XVIII smiled indulgently.

"Your Royal Highness well knows that I am of no importance," Martin calmly replied. "My custom has been to hold my tongue, work my team and pay my rent. My life has been passed in hard and constant labor, and I have wronged

no man. My arms are still strong and my head steady, so I plow my own fields. But a month since I stopped working and left home and family to expose myself to the raillery of the foolish and the contempt of the powerful. The people jest at me in the streets and your Royal Highness probably considers me demented."

"My good fellow," said the king, "we always overlook much in the aged—"

"Your Royal Highness, if I offend, it is because I know not the usages of courts. Consign me to punishment if I deserve it, but let me first deliver my message."

"Say what you will, Martin. We listen."

"'Tis not Martin who speaks. Of himself, Martin would not dare. My words are from heaven."

"From heaven!" mockingly echoed, in refined irony, the admirer of Voltaire. "Perchance from God himself."

"Praised ever be his name!" reverently exclaimed the peasant, upon whom the sarcasm was lost. "Let me now begin. Be it known to your Royal Highness that on the sixteenth of January while ploughing in my field, I noted that the oxen were seized with fright. I marveled and asked myself the reason of it. Turning, I beheld at my

side a beautiful boy in court-dress, with long curls falling upon his shoulders. A chill seized me while I was wondering how he came there. The boy laid his hand upon me, saying: 'Martin, go to him who sits upon the throne' and, without further words, he vanished. All this occurred so rapidly that I regarded the apparition as due to my advanced age. 'Bah!' said I to myself, ' 'tis because of the fog. One sees all sorts of strange things in a fog.' Two days later, in the twilight, while returning home, I saw the boy again at the cross-roads. He said: 'Martin, go to him' and again he vanished. I then fell kneeling. On the following day I saw him amid the willows, near the edge of the river. Finally, on the twenty-first of January I saw him on the border of the woods, leaning upon the trunk of an oak which we call the witch's tree. He said many things that I could not understand, some of which I have forgotten. Others are in my mind now but just as though they were shut in a box. When I open the lid and speak them, they will fly away like released birds and I shall no longer remember them. But until I speak them, they are in here as though red branded," and he motioned toward his forehead.

The date *January twenty-first* made the monarch shudder.

"Describe the boy's appearance and do not be afraid to tell me all."

"I do not fear," declared the peasant. "What could be done to me? Might my life be taken? I am over eighty-five, a dry trunk awaiting the ax. An open grave already yawns for me. The apparition, your Royal Highness, was a beautiful creature and, excepting the dress, like the figure of the archangel Raphael in the parish church. For this reason and in order to set my conscience at rest, I consulted our priest, but he, not daring to give advice, sent me to the bishop, by whom I was told that I related only delusions. I then resolved to keep silent, but the spectre came again, pale, terrible, saying, 'Martin! Martin!' 'Twas night and I in my cot, but, in spite of the late hour, I seized my pouch and staff and, begging my bread along the roadside, journeyed to Paris."

"Go on, go on—The king awaits Martin's revelations."

"Martin's revelations? Here is one, your Royal Highness: *The throne is usurped.*"

"I do not follow your line of reason. Do you mean that there are two kings?" inquired the Bourbon, laughing and remembering Lecazes back of the screen. "Did not my brother die

and his son also? Am I not, therefore, the heir to the throne?"

"Your Royal Highness, the apparition giving warning that you should say these words to me, bade me reply: '*All the dead are not in their tombs.*' "

The effect of these words upon the king was like a blow from an invisible power and he would have started from his chair had his bandaged legs permitted. But disabled as he was, he half raised himself, his hands cleaved the air and his pupils dilated while his face grew crimson.

"Does your Royal Highness require proofs of what I say?" exclaimed the old man, his green eyes darting fire. "Well, then, listen. I will reveal to you a secret thought which you have never imparted to man. Does your Royal Highness remember the morning when you accompanied his late Majesty to the chase and the fearful temptation which assailed you in the woods of Saint Humbert? The king was a dozen steps ahead of you. Your finger was already on the trigger. A branch impeded your arm—"

The alarmed monarch held his throbbing head in his hands while the merciless indictment grew more and more ominous.

"From your earliest years you coveted the

throne. The ill-fated king was the obstacle and you sought to remove him. Unremitting were your fratricidal schemes. You scrupled not to encourage the discontented and to instigate the seditious. What obloquy to have made pacts with the violators of the crown and compromises with the destroyers of churches! Providence permitting, the monarchy would perish. It *shall* perish! I am chosen to announce its fall. Not through the sword of an enemy but by its own hand shall it come to its end."

The screen seemed to move and a rustling was audible, but the king remained silent, terrified and incapable of speech or motion.

"Your cousin, the Duke of Orleans, interposed between your Royal Highness and your partisans. Another crime,—was it? You continued to plot the destruction of your brother and the dishonor of the queen. Does your Royal Highness remember who wrote those scurrilous verses and the words dropped at the baptism of the king's daughter? What ferocious joy the first Dauphin's death caused you! Who notified the Convention that the royal family might be detained on the frontier—the mission of Valory? To what end was Favras sacrificed? Who burned the documents? Those ashes appeal! Blood,

blood has been spilled! but only the first blood. More is to follow!"

As Martin paused, the only sound to be heard in the apartment was the chattering of the king's teeth. The screen creaked repeatedly as though to suggest and to warn, but the king remained speechless and the implacable peasant resumed:

"Your Royal Highness was not brave enough to head the Revolution which you had incited. You fled, notwithstanding your offer to your august brother to share his fate. While abroad, you disregarded his orders and intrigued for the foreign invasion of your country and for the erection of your brother's scaffold. Have you forgotten the king's letter to the Prince of Condé? He disclaimed all responsibility for the invasion. 'Let there be no war!' he entreated 'Behead me rather.' But there *was* war and his head fell besides. Oh the blood!—in pools, in puddles, in the air, on the guillotine! a deluge of blood,—reeking, sickening, revolting! Do you not see it now? Look! It trickles from the ceiling and stains these walls!"

With frenzied indignation the old man continued to gaze at a vision that no other eyes beheld. His arm was thrust forward and his forefinger almost touched the king's forehead.

"The wretched queen, bleeding and headless,

speaks through me. Listen to her, shrieking 'Cain, Cain!' "

The screen creaked as though animated by furious protests and the king remonstrated with what strength he could muster, while the affrighted dog barked timidly and hid himself in the bear-skin under his master's bandaged feet.

"For a time the crime was sterile and the Corsican star lighted the French sky. During that period the innocent boy lived concealed, unknown. Your Royal Highness was the hope of many who were ignorant of the boy's existence. I placed faith in you. We believed that the feet of the Corsican colossus were of clay and must soon sink into the earth. And they did sink. Your Royal Highness seized the crown. But why do you even to-day contrive pitfalls for the orphaned heir and place arms in the hands of the iniquitous?"

The king, with folded and almost supplicating hands, seemed like a criminal imploring clemency, while tremors shook his head and convulsive breathing agitated his breast. Martin suddenly changed his attitude of pitiless accuser and dropped on his knees, saying gently:

"The archangel declares that it is not yet too late for repentance, but that the time is brief and

fleeting. Oh, your Highness, I adjure you to refrain from being anointed. Let not the oil from the holy vials be poured sacrilegiously upon your head. Dare not desecrate the sacred altars by requiem masses for those who have not yet died! No crime is so great as profanation. The tree is accursed, and it shall be uprooted!"

In a prophetic frenzy, he continued:

"It shall be swept away! It shall perish! Uprooted in Italy, uprooted in Spain, uprooted shall it be in France and everywhere!—The canker spreads, rises from limbs to heart—The corroded flesh—Pray God for mercy!"

The king no longer listened. His head fell upon the back of his chair, his face became purple and foam covered his lips as he lay a victim to syncope, which at times overcame him. Martin turned and addressed the screen.

"Concealed fox, come to your master's aid." And slowly he walked toward the door, while the baron, in a panic ran to unfasten the monarch's neckpiece and fan him with a music sheet. Louis XVIII opened his terror-stricken eyes and stammered:

"Let the man go in peace. See that no harm is done him."

Book II

THE CASKET

Chapter I

THE MINIATURE

IN the long colloquy which Amélie and her father held with their unexpected guest, they planned a voyage to France which should be a tentative effort to master the paths and places leading to their proposed goal. As a matter of precaution, they arranged to have no further meetings in London and to join one another in Dover on a day which should be previously designated.

Before leaving, the young Marquis said to his host:

"If you wish to make a generous return for a trifling service—give me this picture."

His eyes were riveted upon a medallion displaying the face of a lady of patrician beauty, which, with other miniatures, was set in a framing of diminutive chrysolites, stones much used during the eighteenth century and which imitate in a marvelous manner the brilliancy of diamonds. The lady's hair rose in curls above a splendid forehead, enclosed her cheeks and fell upon her

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shoulders. Roses and feathers surmounted the graceful coiffure and white laces opened at the neck to reveal a perfect throat.

"Which of the pictures?"

"Amélie's," said René.

Naundorff gravely removed the image and pressed it reverently to his lips. Then he handed it to de Brezé, saying in a broken voice:

" 'Tis not Amélie, but my unhappy, my adored mother."

As René, through delicacy, made a movement of refusal, the mechanic said:

"To only the Marquis de Brezé would I give this medallion. Farewell, loved image, that has so often rested on my heart. I am almost glad to part with you, for who knows how soon my house will for the hundredth time be rifled and I deprived of the last evidences of my personality, my dearest memories, my real life. I am more tranquil when other hands than mine guard my treasures. Watch over them, René, and over all that I have confided to your keeping. This face will bring Amélie to your eyes, for the resemblance is so remarkable, in spite of the difference in dress, that I do not wonder at your mistake."

On reaching the Hotel Douglas, René's first act was to take the miniature from his breast and cover

it with kisses. Then, as he gazed upon the face of the dame of 1780, he murmured:

"How, in heaven's name, have I taken this face for Amélie! Why 'tis the wretched queen, Marie Antoinette, whom it resembles amazingly."

He became thoughtful, and then suddenly felt himself growing weak, almost fainting. The loss of blood began to have effect and he hastened to his bed. Even his curiosity ebbed away. He had not the strength to turn the leaves of the manuscript. Instinct moved him to place it and the casket beneath the mattress.

Hardly had he stretched his limbs, when a fever overcame him. A disturbed sleep, in which incoherent and fantastic ideas surged, oppressed his brain. The extraordinary events of the previous night were grotesquely reproduced. Amélie, in her white dress, broke through the garden trellis and threw herself into his arms, imploring him to carry her away from London; the Duchess de Rousillon, erect and haughty, barred the passage to Naundorff's door; Naundorff, himself, lay upon the pavement of the square, gashed and bloody; the streets were red torrents rushing toward the Thames, and he, René, battled for his life in the river of blood.

With parched throat and tongue, he tossed

through the night, to welcome, at last, the dawn gleaming through his window curtains. He vainly tried to raise himself and so lay helplessly until the entry of a servant, whom he immediately dispatched for a doctor. The doctor prescribed quiet and rest, forbidding his patient to leave his bed during four days. On the fifth, with clearer head and diminished thirst, René closed his eyes in a sweet sleep.

During the morning a travelling coach drew up before the Hotel upon whose front seat valises and handsome wallets bore a count's heraldric blazonry. A valet de chambre, thickset and awkward, preceded an elegant gentleman whose dress harmonized with the sumptuous equipage. His cloak and gray felt hat eminently merited the adjective *fashionable* which was an English term then beginning to be applied in France to whatever was distinguished by good taste.

"Attend the gentleman! Bring in his baggage!" called out the host, whose patrons consisted usually of impecunious Scotch lairds and shabby Glasgow tradesmen, and rarely numbered such distinguished guests as the invalid French marquis and this newly arrived nobleman so showy and immaculate, bearing no marks of his recent journey. The irreproachable traveler ordered a

suite. The valet superintended the conveying of the baggage, his purple face and red whiskers gleaming above the folds of an ample cravat. As soon as the master and servant were alone in the count's sleeping chamber, they drew close together and the valet whispered:

"We have caught the bird in his cage. What are we to do now?"

"Find out all that has happened to the precious Marquis. Show some brains in this business since you played the fool in the square." And, as he concluded this speech, Volpetti removed his hat, arranged his Chateaubriand tuft of hair, viewed himself in the mirror and extracted from his pockets a variety of toilet appurtenances,—files, pincers, scissors, etc., which doubtless pertained to the collection which Alberto Serra was to pass through Gibraltar.

The valet was absent about twenty minutes, during which he introduced himself in the kitchen by the name of Brosseur and began a chat with the cook. He was holding in one hand a steaming jug when his master called out in an infuriated tone:

"Well, rascal, how long am I to wait? Do you want your head broken?"

Brosseur hurried to Volpetti's chamber, locked

the door, set down the jug and gleefully rubbed his hands together, saying:

"Wonderful news! Just what I expected! I did not play such a great fool after all. The Marquis has been ill in bed four days from his wounds and has seen only his physician."

"Are you telling the truth?"

"The gospel truth."

"Have letters come to him?"

"Not one. I played the greenhorn, asking questions. I stumbled on a steward whose tongue is a jewel."

"Is the wound serious?"

"I believe not. It has produced a fever. The knife missed the lung by half a centimeter,—cursed be the devil! Why, we saw him leave Naundorff's house afoot and take a cab for Wellington street."

"Very well! Now, repeat to me in detail all that occurred after the Marquis left the house."

"After remaining within a long time, he came forth, lighted to the door by a woman. Then he started off alone and, on reaching the centre of the square, picked up the knife which we had there forgotten. In doing so, he dropped an object which he carried beneath his arm. This he quickly recovered. It looked rectangular in shape

and had a metallic sound on striking the trunk of the tree."

"Did he have the box during the scuffle in the square?"

"I swear he did not, for his movements were most free. No; he received that box in Naundorff's house."

On hearing these words, Volpetti could not restrain an exclamation of joy, and passing his patrician hand over his Chateaubriand tuft, he said, motioning toward the baggage and the bath:

"Make arrangements for the changing of my clothes. I wish an embroidered shirt, silk stockings, violet coat and grey breeches. And, using the greatest caution, find out the number of the Marquis's chamber and sketch me a plan of the hotel. Remember well the entrances and exits. Secure for yourself, if possible, a room next that of the Marquis, and 'twould be most fortunate that it have a fireplace. Well, later, I shall give you further instructions. Be diligent and discreet."

The valet, with malignant flashing eyes, hastened away to carry out these instructions.

Chapter II

THE DAUPHIN'S SISTER

RENÉ, on feeling stronger, resolved to read the manuscript which awakened his interest more and more deeply. The enigma of Naundorff's obscure life, the cause of the attack in the square, Amélie's startling resemblance to the medallion—all would be explained by that roll of paper in the cylindrical case.

He rose and breakfasted on tea and toast, after which, fortified and resolute, he examined his pistols and placed them within reach. Then he stretched himself upon a lounge near the table and broke the seal, which represented a tuberose and sarcophagus,—a symbolic emblem causing him to start. His eyes next fell upon the dedicatory words at the head of the manuscript: TO HER.

"Is this a love history?" he asked himself, recalling Naundorff's beautiful countenance and indefinable charm. With feverish anxiety, he turned the leaf and read:

"This is the recital of my misfortunes which

you alone can assuage. Remember that you must at last stand before God."

Then the text continued:

Since my tireless enemies and malevolent fate are combined for the purpose of forcing me to die beneath a spurious name and destitute of the rights to which my birth entitles me; since you, yourself (in whom I had faith because it seemed monstrous to doubt you), have discredited my claim: I hold up to you a mirror reflecting the insistent memories of which you are so great a part, that your remorse may hereafter be the greater, if this appeal I make softens not your heart and if the impositions of royalty outweigh the supplications of blood.

A day shall come, Thérèse, when posterity, marveling at my abandoned condition, will indignantly ask why the powers of Europe made no protest at the iniquity practised upon me. But that posterity should consider the fate of our parents,—yours and mine, Thérèse,—the fate of the ignominious journey to the guillotine as well as the indifference before that spectacle of those who should have burned their last cartridge in defence of the victims! Ah, Thérèse! In vain do you seek to restore THE PRINCIPLE,—to use the expression you of the Court employ—in vain do

you seek to restore THE PRINCIPLE which is the basis of our national glory. Our country's weakness at the present time consists in the repudiation of that PRINCIPLE.

Perhaps I seem a dreamer or a lunatic, but, nevertheless, 'tis by the light of my unparalleled misfortunes that I perceive the impending cataclysm. The PRINCIPLE has suicided and the INSTITUTION has received its death blow. What life remains to it will be puerile and despicable. Trampled by its enemies, humiliated, scourged, manacled, crowned in mockery, buffeted, its purple mantle in shreds, it shall at last be crucified, not to await a glorious resurrection but to crumble to dust in a fleur de lis cemetery.

Fools are those who build above a raging torrent. Lay not the flattering unction to your soul, Thérèse, that you have saved the dynasty by sacrificing your brother. God is no Moloch to be propitiated by such holocausts. Sterile has been your womb as a warning to you, and other lessons, tremendous and desolating, have you yet to learn. As for me, my descendants will toil and sweat over labors as arduous as my own, and so shall the ages expiate.

How dreadful is my fate, Thérèse! I live, I breathe, but *I*, as *I*, do not exist; that *I* has been

buried in an empty coffin, in the angle of two walls of a cemetery. At times I doubt my very senses and all that I am about to relate to you seems the very fabric of a dream,—but then no dream has ever been so long and fearful. 'Tis only my anguish that convinces me of reality. I co-ordinate my memories and perceive that I am *not* a deluded fool. Once I described my misgivings to a physician in Germany, saying that in believing myself to be another I feared at times that I was demented. He said he had known similar cases and advised me to summon all my mental strength and hold a powerful light to the mirror of my consciousness.

"Impostors have there been who were not liars," said the doctor fixing upon me a penetrating look. Those impostors have believed their asseverations." Thérèse, I appeal to you to rescue me from this appalling phenomenon.

And as I am opening my heart to you,—the heart which throbs, not the inert heart which was offered you with the assurance that it had been taken from my dead body and which you refused to accept,—since I conceal nothing from you, Thérèse, O listen! I implore you to convince me that I am a wretched dupe of the Revolution, for perhaps 'twould be best that I should be persuaded that

my reason is diseased. Be pitiful, Thérèse, even tho you refuse me love.

And now, whether I rave or speak truth, I summon my life's memories even from infancy. I stand in that incomparable summer palace in which we lived before the bursting forth of the Revolution. I walk through the magnificent salons adorned by rare artists, and amid those marvelous gardens wherein the skill of Le Nôtre surpassed itself. But more vivid still than the memories of these splendors is the image of the charming villa of diminutive blue lakes and rustic kiosks and the verdant farm where our mother in simple muslin (how beautiful she was, Thérèse!) delighted to drink fresh milk, gather wild flowers and scatter grain to the birds. How gay we were, you and I, participating in these innocent amusements, in our straw hats and cool white dresses. One day an artist painted us so, and, as I grew restive and troublesome during the sitting, my mother said gently, "Charles Louis, I shall soon know whether or not you love me." This sweet remonstrance quieted me. I so loved my mother that the sound of her voice in singing always brought tears to my eyes.

But the roaring tempest broke,—the Revolution. Our father did not realize the peril; he *could* not

believe that he was hated; he expected daily a reconciliation with his people. But our mother's virile spirit perceived from the first that not only the throne but the royal heads as well were in danger. I was too young to understand causes but I realized that the atmosphere was transformed into something strained and dolorous. Accustomed as I was to all manner of attentions, to hear laughing applause after my youthful sallies, to behold only approving and smiling countenances, I suddenly realized that no one had the time or the inclination to caress me and that grave anxiety seemed the reason for my neglect. Rumors of contentions, abrupt alarms, hurried changing of apartments, enforced awakenings in the early morning, terrorized prayers dictated by our good aunt, our father's sister, who, joining our hands, would bid us kneel and beg God for mercy—all this filled even my child-mind with the consciousness of impending danger. One night a furious multitude surrounded the palace. Some one snatched me from bed and carried me away to concealment, and my mother, *our* mother, stripped herself of a lace gown and flung it around me, that I should be somewhat protected. You were near, Thérèse, sobbing affrightedly and waiting to be carried away to a place of security.

Do you remember the morning on which the inebriated multitude forced us to return to Paris? Our carriage was advancing slowly; the heat and dust almost asphyxiated us; our throats were parched with thirst, but none of us dared ask for a drop of water. Brawny fellows rode ahead of us, howling and brandishing pikes surmounted by bleeding human heads. One of these men, whose wide-open mouth in the midst of a long matted beard resembled a cavern, came to the window. Terror-stricken, I buried my face in our mother's bosom and so remained during the entire journey.

After this journey,—how long after, I know not—we made that other journey, ill-timed and inauspicious, which sealed our fate. And now appeared my uncle's form, our father's brother, whom, of late, we had scarcely seen, for since our misfortunes he had frequented the camps of the disaffected and abetted our parents' calumniators. But on this occasion he seemed solicitous for our deliverance and co-operated in our arrangements for escape. Against our mother's judgment, had our father confided the project to his brother, who advised that the iniquitous Valory, a creature possessed body and soul by the Count of Piov-

ence, should be entrusted with the details of the flight.

A program was mapped out whose happy exit seemed assured. To what purpose all the minute precautions? Why was I disguised as a girl and told I should say my name was 'Amélie,' were I asked: Amélie, a name to me eternal and which I have given to the daughter of my soul. Reflect, Thérèse, upon that sinister journey, and decide who profited thereby. There is a sentence in Hamlet running thus: The serpent that did sting my father's life now wears his crown.

I shall always believe that our mother suspected the hand that detained us. Valory, who preceded us, was but the agent of those who with the kiss of betrayal delivered us shackled. The ambush was prepared with infernal adroitness. The detention occurred when we had almost reached the frontier that greater obloquy might be heaped upon the royal family than if it had been surprised near Paris.

Valory rode mounted ahead of our carriage and took so little pains to dissemble as to disappear near the last change of horses, causing our mother mortal terror. She made her suspicions known to our father, who, displeased and pained, rejected them. Our father's faith in his brother

was implicit. Our mother never succeeded in combating it, not even after the farce accomplished by the notorious Drouet, who today enjoys the favor and protection of the usurper.

You, Thérèse, have accepted his protection, also. 'Tis we who make history and not revolutions caused by currents of ideas. Believe, rather, in human passions, in the ambitions of the mighty which carry in their train the faith of a confiding and bewildered multitude. And believe, also, in a Nemesis of expiation, though 'tis at times the innocent who wash away the stains of the guilty.

You remember the termination of that flight. On our return I was exceedingly fatigued and ill at ease. My girl's dress added to my discomfort and I was at last relieved of it by our faithful valet, who put me to bed, on this first night in Paris after our capture.

Several officers of the National Guard remained near my bed and affectionately bade me sleep tranquilly. While I dozed, they smoked and chatted and their voices soothed me; even the clanking of their spurs was pleasant reassurance. I sank into a lethargy, of what length I know not. Suddenly my eyes seemed opening on a startling spectacle. The Guard surrounded me.

They laughed and spoke words which I could not understand. By degrees their human outlines became blurred and they were covered with hair. Their hands grew into long grey paws terminating in sharp nails, their faces projected into snouts, their eyes glowed as live coals and their voices howled fearfully. Wolves! wolves! famishing, frantic wolves. Their hot breathing was stifling as they leaned to devour me——

I must have screamed, for I waked in my mother's arms, as she snatched me from bed, covering my face with kisses. Those kisses are still on my face, Thèrése, and I feel now the passionate embrace with which she clasped me to her, and I see the terrible dread on her beautiful pale face.

Chapter III

THE EMPTY COFFIN

THÉRÈSE, do you remember how we were taken to the Assembly, there to pass the day within a grated tribunal and led thence to prison? How from that prison we were afterwards transferred to another more gloomy still? O the tower, the tower! The impressions of sorrow are deeper than those of happiness. Tell me, Thérèse, my companion in that captivity, has greater suffering ever been endured than in that tower? If those walls, so soon after demolished, (for all traces of my history have been obliterated), if those stones that once were walls had a voice, that voice would be a sob. If they might writhe, they would wring out tears. Even their name is a wail. There is no elegy so sad as the towers.

The agonies of our family,—you know them as well as I, for they are your own. But what you do *not* know are mine,—a child torn from his mother's arms as she was led to the guillotine. And though you seek to drive them from your knowledge, you *shall* hear them.

Let me describe this prison to you, that you may realize 'tis your brother who speaks. What detail could I forget of that damp tower flanked by four smaller ones of arched roofs? The roof of the first was sustained in the centre by a heavy pillar and its doors were of strong boards fastened together by nails and guarded by heavy bolts; the interior door was of cast iron; the walls were grey and black, in imitation of a tomb; the white border was garnished with the tricolor on which were traced the words: RIGHTS OF MAN. This was the only decoration of the filthy apartment wherein vulgar and malevolent people constantly watched us.

On first entering the tower, I believed myself to be dreaming and that soon I should be rescued from the nightmare, as my mother had snatched me from the wolves. This conviction was doubtless due to the contrast between my past and present condition. My childhood had glided by so sweetly and placidly; my senses had been stimulated by such great beauty and elegance; the epoch upon which my mother stamped her refinement was so poetic and artistic; the gardens in which I had played were so beautiful; my material wants anticipated with so much adulation, that I had grown to comprehend only smiles and

beauty. It was considered an honor to touch me, to be near me. No wonder, then, that the transition from palace to prison affected my nervous system to the extent of causing the obsession to possess me that I was two persons in one.

I might describe our incarceration to the minutest particular; I might tell you the exact position of your bed and mine and the armchair of white-painted wood in which our father dozed before dinner. Only listen to me, Thérèse, and you will open your arms.

You will remember that I was taken away from our father and mother after their condemnation to death, and delivered to two creatures who scarcely seemed to pertain to the human species,—a pair of brutes who had doubtless received instructions to render me idiotic through vile treatment. But I must tell the truth. My guardians were indeed cruel, but not to the extent which is usually believed. The inhumanity of that cobbler and his wife has been greatly exaggerated, possibly with the object of establishing my supposed death. Were the account true which has obtained currency, I should not have survived. No child could have withstood an unremitting martyrdom of hunger, blows, nakedness, and deprivation of sleep. These hardships, indeed,

I endured, but with intervals of respite. Husband and wife were not equally brutal; he was crafty and cruel, she gross and stupid, but possessing a heart of some tenderness. Unhappy woman! I caused her ruin among that of many others. For maintaining that I was not dead, she was declared insane and placed in confinement. In her clumsy manner, she had protected me and often smuggled into my couch candy and cheap toys.

On being taken from the custody of this couple, I was placed in the cell in which our father's valet had been imprisoned. Here my condition was worse than ever before. The windows, always closed, shut out light and air. The doors opened only to those who, in silence, brought me food. The furniture consisted of a table, a jug of water and the bed,—shelf, rather,—on which I slept. Noxious odors slowly poisoned my blood.

While I here languished, the Revolution continued to rage fiercely, though the period of delirium had passed and a species of authority obtained. You and I, the hapless remnants of an ill-starred dynasty, seemed relegated to oblivion, but there were some who thought of us with pity. The friends who had futilely sought to save our parents' lives formed plans for rescuing me. She who was my most zealous champion and

spent much money in my behalf was the charming creole, native of the island of Martinique, and wife of a Revolutionary general. Of this lady a negress in her native land had predicted that she should be Empress and experience glory and sorrow without limit. She was at heart a legitimist. Anarchy prevailed in all departments of governments, skeptics had succeeded fanatics and the public voice denounced the Directory. The first indication which reached me of the termination of this era of tigers and hyenas was the receiving of clean clothes, the entry of fresh air through the windows which were opened at last, and the replacing of my daily mess of lentils by decent food.

My friends did not find it a simple task to accomplish my rescue. A new wave of public ferocity seemed imminent. To bribe my custodians, themselves under unceasing surveillance, was most difficult. The Municipal Council had agents stationed at the entrance and exit of the tower. Had it been a question of heroic sacrifice only, there would have lacked not noble partisans of our House to dash themselves against even invincible obstacles.

Would that I had died within those walls, permeated with the atmosphere of our immolated

mother. I should have perished, as you have expressed my supposed fate, 'like a blighted flower.' For my greater sorrow, generous abnegation and political malevolence combined to remove me from this living tomb. The account of my flight is an incoherent one. I myself can scarcely coordinate its episodes, for I was too feeble to comprehend them clearly. My true history will never be historically known, for an oligarchy, such as once existed in Venice, suppressed what suited its purpose. No corroborating documents exist to verify even my fragmentary recital.

The Revolution smouldered and the fall of the government was predicted. Astute ambitions of various kinds combined to effect my freedom. Unbridled lust for power grew rank. Our uncle, your present protector, Thérèse, rallied around him, by employing my name as a summons, the elements of the Restoration, meanwhile secretly paralyzing the efforts directed toward my liberation. This he accomplished by procrastination and discouragement. He was trusting to my prison life to attain the desired consummation. But notwithstanding his efforts to double-bar my cell, and even tho he would have thrown the weight of his body against the door to insure its security, he was thwarted by a man who had temporarily seized

the reins of authority,—a voluptuary, destitute of genuine energy—who realized that the possession of my person would constitute an imposing arm. He planned to place me in concealment from which to produce me when it should suit him to declare me among the living. By this subtlety he might dominate even our uncle with whom he maintained (as did other revolutionists who were deemed incorruptible) a secret intercourse, avowedly with the end of establishing a moderate Restoration,—which should concede what had been already acquired by the Revolution. I, kept in hiding, would be a double-edged sword, a menace to the arrogance of my uncle in his claim to the regency and a guarantee to the loyal troops who were giving battle in the far East. Behold the stratagem forced by the ingenious and base-born Barras. As instruments, he selected the charming creole (wife of the adventurer who later subjugated Europe) and two military men attached to the royal cause.

Thus it happened that men, who in the midst of anarchy and administrative chaos, held the reins of power, wove, by their audacity and wit, the complicated plot of my rescue and made current the report of my death. Tho it was impossible to remove me bodily from my cell, a simple matter it

proved to thrust me into the loft above my bed. A boy who had been smuggled in a basket of clean clothes replaced me. This substitute was a deaf-mute and so the imitation was perfect, for I had during my imprisonment maintained a constant silence.

I do not remember how the transition was effected. I had been given a dose of drugged sweetened water. During my stupor I was placed in the loft. As I awoke, the voices of my two deliverers implored me to remain perfectly still. Shivering with cold and almost fainting from hunger, never did I attempt approaching the door. Food was brought me with the greatest irregularity, which I would devour and then huddle into a corner. While I lay in this stifling hole, the rumor of my escape was disseminated; spies were set on the frontier to watch for me by governmental officers not in the plot.

Meanwhile, Barras gleefully rubbed his hands and in order to further mystify the public he doubled the guard about my prison, while I groveled, shuddering, in my filthy covert.

Barras realized that my mock death and burial would alone complete the strategy; he visited the cell and gave instructions for the replacing of the deaf-mute by a dying boy to be procured at a

hospital. This hapless child succumbed in my name and poets sang dirges over him, queens and princesses robed themselves in crêpe, priests held aloft thousands of times the sacred host in sacrifice. That boy dead in rags and squalor, Thérèse, is often in my mind as I reflect on the vanity of royalty.

Physicians who had never beheld me testified to the Dauphin's demise, after witnessing the death of my substitute,—the death which was the signal for my release. When the autopsy was completed, a surgeon extracted the boy's heart and sent it to you, the Dauphin's sister, Thérèse. You rejected that heart. Why?

And now I listen to the culminating horror! The body of that boy was taken from the coffin at night and buried in the tower's garden, whence, years later, the skeleton was exhumed, and that coffin was the sinister vehicle which bore me from my prison. In that coffin I was taken along the road leading to the cemetery. During the journey I was removed and weights placed within. And these weights were found to be the contents when subsequently an attempt was made to recover my body. The coffin was buried with suspicious dispatch after the manner of deeds which fear the light. The public voice clamored that an im-

posture had been practised, whereupon the Government speedily dispatched a commission which disinterred the coffin, fastened the lid on more securely and placed it in another cemetery. This incident is so well known that I shall call it history.

Chapter IV

MARIE

I WAS placed in the home of a lady, who was the widow of a Swiss officer who had been beheaded on the memorable tenth of August. In her country place I was screened from curious eyes. Being overcome by a languid illness, I remained indoors for eight months. My hostess dared not call in a physician, for strange children awakened suspicion, inasmuch as the lost Dauphin was being eagerly sought by spies. She fed me on milk and arranged that I should have unlimited repose and fresh air. These simple restoratives at length effected a cure. On leaving my bed, I was again overpowered by the consciousness of a dual personality. I at times felt convinced that I had always lived in that fair green villa and that my insistent past was a delusion. My guardian spoke French brokenly, and we, therefore, conversed in German, which had been my mother's native tongue. I had therefore become habituated to its

use. Later in life I was obliged to employ it constantly.

During my convalescence, and while walking one morning in the fields, I was captured by the police and dragged back to prison. What prison? I know not. With equal swiftness was I snatched thither by deputies of my vigilant protectress, the gentle creole, and placed in the home of a noble family who received me with respect, almost reverence. The head of the family was the Marquis de Bray, a partisan of our House. There it was that I formed the first friendship of my life, that with the Count of Montmorin, a youth older than I and who, like myself, was in concealment, being disguised as a hunter. Montmorin's life had been miraculously saved during one of the ferocious tides that swept our country, and that life he generously consecrated to me. Subterfuges, manœuvres, almost witch-craft did he employ for the deluding of my persecutors, and to that end valued not his own security and happiness.

Under the protection of de Bray and Montmorin, I lived tranquilly and the spectre of political ambition seemed no longer to haunt me. But my friends feared, owing to the waxing power of Napoleon, that France was no appropriate refuge for me and we removed for a season to Venice,

thence to Trieste and finally to Rome, where I enjoyed the gentle protection of Pope Pius VI. My former hostess and nurse, the Swiss lady, had in the interval married a compatriot of her own, who was an expert watchmaker. It chanced that they became our neighbors and so gave me the opportunity to learn the craft of which my father was so fond. The minute and prolix labor enchanted me and, following the advice of Jean Jacques, I mastered it.

A friend of the Pontiff offered me for residence a villa near Rome. How beautiful were the lemon and fig groves! In the garden's centre was a marble pillar surmounted by a nymph which had stood there since the Roman Empire. Amid the fragrance of those flowers were passed the dearest days of my youth. Marie, daughter of Bray and fiancée of Montmorin, a gentle girl, five years my senior—a trifle it seemed to me—accompanied me often with affectionate solicitude.

Her white hands smoothed my golden curls, fastened my lace collar and rested on my shoulder, during our rambles. Montmorin, on seeing us together, would turn away and re-enter the house. My head, resting upon Marie's breast, seemed again to repose in the sweet nest from which the Revolution had torn me. Once when Marie flung

a flower in my face, the image of my mother rose so vividly to my eyes, as she appeared when romping with us in the royal gardens, that my emotion overcame me and I threw myself into the arms of Montmorin's fiancée. I kissed her lips and asked: "Marie, what have they done to my mother?"—for since the terrible day when I was separated from her, I had never spoken her name, nor received intelligence of her fate. I pictured her still as a pale, worn prisoner and my duty seemed to be to deliver her. This sudden tempest of passion transformed me from boy to man. Marie wept softly in my arms.

"My mother,—where is she?" I insisted.

"She is dead," said Marie gently.

"O my mother!" I cried out, falling senseless to the ground.

On regaining consciousness, I saw Marie at my pillow.

"O die with me," I said. "Let us be with my mother."

When I was strong enough to leave my bed, I noticed that Marie, under numerous pretexts, absented herself from me. Our rambles ceased and she was often with Montmorin. This at first enraptured her lover but he soon discovered that she was preoccupied and sad, while I, jealous and

melancholy, walked alone in the woods. I wandered near the margins of pestilential lakes, in the hope that, being overcome by malaria, Marie would again sit by my bed.

Montmorin's generous heart divined the cause of my sadness and of Marie's enforced fidelity to him. He said:

"Marie, our first duty is to make Augustus" (for so he called me) "happy. I shall go to France in his interests."

And he left us. Consider Montmorin's action, Thérèse, and realize to what a generous and absurd height a loyal soul is raised by the PRINCIPLE symbolized in royalty. Montmorin renounced his plighted wife as later on he renounced his life in devotion to the PRINCIPLE. And Marie, beholding in me not a hapless castaway but the incarnation of the PRINCIPLE, erected like a second Lavalliere an altar whereon she radiantly idealized me, after having vainly sought to idealize her betrothed.

On the day after Montmorin's departure, we walked through the fields scarcely touching the ground. Reaching the border of the pestilential lake, we seated ourselves near the verdant fringe of delicate flowers. My head rested on her

breast and our eyes promised what our lips could not utter, for very happiness.

On returning home, Marie complained of feeling cold. The next day she lay shivering in bed. The malaria was having its effect. Her clear eyes grew clouded and after some days her dear form became emaciated. Montmorin was summoned, but she could scarcely greet him. The bells from the Capuchin convent near by were pealing out into the air and we knelt by her bed as she said:

"Eugene, brother of my soul, forgive me."

For answer, Montmorin took my hand in his.

"Watch over him, Eugene."

Montmorin, shedding hot streaming tears, promised. Together we watched beside her until she died.

Chapter V

A COURTEOUS MAN

SO far had René read. The revelations were so startling that he could but ask himself if he were the victim of a madman's delusion.

"Am I reading a romance or a sincere autobiography? Before going further, I should look at the documents within the box. I must not espouse this man's cause while a shadow of doubt disturbs me. And Amélie? If these pages speak the truth, who am I to look upon Amélie?"

The daylight was fading and a servant appeared bearing a candelabrum which he placed upon a stand, saying:

"Monsieur, a French gentleman asks to be admitted to you."

René placed the manuscript beneath the sofa pillow and said:

"How did the French gentleman learn that I am here? What is his name?"

The man handed him a card bearing these words: The Count de Keller

"Who may this be?" murmured René to himself. Then aloud:

"Bid him enter."

When alone, the Marquis concealed the manuscript in his traveling bag which also contained the casket or box. He awaited the visitor, remembering Naundorff's words: You have trusted men; in future beware of them. You have been frank; in future be astute and reticent.

Then an elegantly appareled gentleman entered in a coat of violet cloth ornamented with gold buttons and a close-fitting pair of grey cashmere breeches. The many folds in his white cravat made him hold his head high indeed. On his finely shaped thigh dangled resplendently the chain and ornaments of the Sullivan, the latest fad. His appearance was prepossessing and he recalled vividly the famous Chateaubriand type.

"I arrived here but this morning, Marquis de Brezé, and permit me to confide to you that I find the hotel execrable," and the Count inclined his body gracefully before René. "I cannot forgive my friend, Captain MacGreagor for recommending such a hole to me. When my valet complained of the service, he was told that another French gentleman in the hotel was well satisfied with the accommodations. I asked your name and,

as it is one so well known, I hastened to comply with the pleasing duty of compatriots when in foreign parts. I regret to learn that you have been wounded."

René, motioning his visitor to a seat, replied with reserve:

"A thousand thanks. I am almost entirely restored. Monsieur, permit me to observe that your title is unknown to me."

"Not all of us may proudly trace descent from Crusader knights, like the Marquis de Brezé. My father's brother, a resident of Munich, received his title from the King of Bavaria, to whom he rendered a service," obsequiously replied the Count de Keller.

"What is this fool trying to say?" René asked himself, mentally, while the other continued:

"What detestable lodgings have fallen to your lot, Marquis." And his keen eyes swept the chamber. "Why, they have given you no desk! not even a bureau or closet; only that miserable bed and this sofa—Confound their impertinence! Were you not ill—though you do not appear so—was it an attack, Marquis?"

"I scarcely know," replied René indifferently. "Some rogues sought to relieve me of my pocketbook and I played the fool in attempting to resist

them. One of them scratched my shoulder; the police interfered and prevented further injury."

"London is a dangerous place, indeed!" ejaculated the Count. "One is at the mercy of pickpockets. I have been here before and should have known better than to be ensnared into putting up at the Hotel Douglas. But I rejoice that my presence here has enabled me to pay my compliments to your lordship. Do you contemplate changing your lodgings? If so, permit me to recommend The Crown, to which I am about to remove. That hotel is patronized by the aristocracy and we shall there be in our element."

"I have no plans," replied René indifferently. "I am here in the interest of my mother, the Duchess de Rousillon. It is possible I shall soon return to France. I thank you for the information. I crave your pardon for my seeming lack of courtesy in failing to return your visit, but I am pressed for time." And he bowed his visitor out of the door and again threw himself upon his couch.

Volpetti—for it was he—returned to Brosseur whom he found inspecting the fireplace, in which a bright coke fire was burning. The valet drew a paper from his pocket on which was a diagram in pencil, saying:

"This is the plan of the house. Here is No. 23, which is our bird's cage. Your apartments are 13 and 15, so that four rooms intervene between yours and his. I have engaged 21 for myself. I had hard work getting it, for these people have a mighty reverence for the aristocracy and were loathe to place me so near the Marquis. I therefore protested that my master the Count would be furious at my being placed at a great distance from him."

"Has your chamber a fireplace?" asked Volpetti.

"Do you think I should otherwise have taken it?" demanded Brosseur.

"Well, I am just from the Marquis's chamber and there is no object there beneath which he could conceal even a key. The box must be in either his traveling bags or underneath his mattress. If once you enter the room, 'twill be a moment's work to find it. If the bags are unlocked, take out the box; if locked, carry them off. And beware of blundering. I don't want the English police to mix up into what is none of their business. You must play the role of an ordinary thief who has stolen from even his master. If you are caught, I will rescue you, but beware how you implicate me. And now I leave under pre-

tence of going to the Hotel Crown, while you remain behind apparently to arrange the baggage, but in reality to get the box. Use prudence and cunning. You will then come to me. We have already arranged our place of meeting."

Volpetti threw on an elegant grey traveling cloak which reached almost to his feet, drew on gloves and carefully placed a hat upon his handsome head. René, meanwhile, relieved of his unwelcome visitor, continued reading the manuscript, as reproduced in the following chapter.

Chapter VI

TORTURE

MARIE'S death brought me such sorrow that another great misfortune was necessary to rouse me from my apathy and desolation. During Napoleon's invasion of Italy our villa was sacked and fired. Montmorin and I managed to escape, carrying with us a small quantity of money and certain documents which we deposited in a place of security. We reached Rome and passed on to Civita Vecchia, from which we embarked on a merchant brig for England. We boarded the vessel during threatening weather. Hardly had we put to sea when the waves and wind rose high, sweeping the deck and breaking one of the masts. Then we were driven pitilessly toward the French coast and seemed about to break upon the reefs. Montmorin and I were dismayed at the prospect of landing in France. The captain perceived our terror and observed that we must have an ugly secret. We disembarked at Dieppe and were examined by

the Marine and Quarantine Commissions, to which the captain communicated his suspicions regarding us. We were, nevertheless, dismissed, and hastened to conceal ourselves in an obscure inn, with the intention of seizing the first opportunity of leaving for Spain or England. But the police followed us. I was alone when the officers entered. I hastily pressed some money into a servant-maid's hand, bidding her stand at the street corner and warn Montmorin of the danger on his return. I was conducted to what was known as the Delegation and subjected to a series of questions. Being inexperienced, I compromised myself. I was placed, during the night, on a coasting barge. We landed at a little port whose name I never learned, and entered a carriage there in waiting We started on a journey which lasted four days, at the end of which I was placed in a Paris prison, where I remained six days. On the seventh a young man of affable manners, whom I later learned went by the name of Volpetti, entered my cell. He spoke German. I was almost too weak to reply.

"Friend," he said, "I know your history. You are playing a rôle which providence has not assigned you. Your friends have inoculated you with the virus of royal ambition. I come to offer

you salvation from this induced mania. Swear to me by the memory of your mother that you will not seek to escape from the monastery to which I shall conduct you. In return, you will be promised that not a hand shall be raised against you. Buried beneath a religious name in Belgium or Italy, your life will pass serenely."

Thérèse, the blood that courses through your body and mine, the blood of the Hapsburgs and Bourbons, rose imperious against the indignity of the proposition.

"I fling your offer in your teeth, Monsieur!" I cried.

Volpetti looked disappointed. He disliked violent measures. In choicest German and softest voice he sought to persuade me. My head turned to the wall, I made no further answer. Then, slowly approaching the door, he gave an order, whereupon two muscular brutes entered. Supposing they were my murderers, I delivered my soul to God and spoke three names—my mother's, Marie's and—O Thérèse, yours!

The ruffians dragged me from my wretched bed, bound me with cords which cut into my flesh and tied me in a rough chair. I thought they were preparing to torture me and in terror I shrieked:

"Unbind me! I consent."

Volpetti approached, saying:

"Do you wish to be released?"

My pride flared up and I disdained to answer.

Then they gagged me and passed over my face an instrument which seemed to riddle the flesh with sharp needles. I tried to cry out and break the cords, whereupon one of the fellows thrust his iron fingers, like pincers, into my side. The violent pressure caused a swoon. When I recovered consciousness, a great heat overpowered me, for my torturers were moistening my face with a liquid which stung fiercely. I swooned again from the intense pain.

On awakening, I carried my hand to my eyes but failed to find them. I touched, instead, two lumps of swollen, throbbing flesh. I lay on a filthy bed, freed from the cords. Some one gave me a plate of broth which I managed to swallow. I asked my jailor if it was dawn.

"The noon sun shines brightly," he answered.

"I am blind!" I wailed. At that moment the concept of Expiation broke upon my mind,—the heinous sins which my suffering was effacing.

"Bring me some warm water," I entreated. The man brought it and, after applying it to my face, I fell asleep.

Chapter VII

THE BLACK HOLE

I LIVED in darkness for two weeks. Then the inflammation began to subside and a ray of light penetrated my eyes and heart and I wept in gratitude for the joy of looking upon the filthy walls of my dungeon. I started in horror upon beholding in one of the window panes the image of my distorted and swollen face. I realized that an attempt had been made to efface all vestige of lineage from my countenance. But with the passing of time much of the disfigurement disappeared.

One morning soldiers entered my cell and carried me into a close carriage, which, after several hours of travel, stopped before that grim fortress whose very name freezes the blood,—Vincennes.

It had been decreed by my captors that I should here end my days. But what of the creole, my protectress? She was living her days of brilliancy. The Empire—such an Empire!—was being hatched amid the folds of the Consulate. The creole was absorbed by one great fear,—the fear of

failing to furnish an heir to that adumbrating Empire. Thérèse, let us smile together at the endurance of thrones. Why, a crown scarcely seems worth the commission of a crimé. It cannot even bring sleep to eyes that stare widely during whole nights.

Europe resounded with the blare of trumpets and clarions, the reverberations of cannon and the clashing of swords, while skilful needle-women embroidered a purple mantle for the creole's graceful shoulders.

On descending the carriage opposite the embattled tower, I was conducted beneath an armored postern, through three gates, along a circuitous route which lay between damp gray walls, down two stairways, reaching at length an iron door through which I was pushed into a windowless dungeon, known as The Black Hole and destined as a vestibule to my grave.

I dared not move, fearing to fall into a pit. The only sound I heard was the loud beating of my heart. At last my jailer,—a man having but one eye,—entered the cell. A lantern hung about his neck beneath a sullen countenance. With his rough hand he thrust at me a plate of repulsive food. The light of his lantern illumined the floor. Speedily glancing around, I ascertained that it was

free of pitfalls. My enclosure was a damp, moldy, black tomb. In one corner was some straw and a tattered blanket; in another a bench and jug.

The next day my keeper brought me a loaf of hard bread and a jug of water. I ate part of the bread and went to sleep. On awaking, I failed to find the remainder. I shuddered. Who was with me? Who had stolen my bread? I was wrought up to a state of frenzy which the entrance of my jailer subdued. I asked him who had taken my bread. He did not answer. Leaving more bread and water, he departed. I ate half my bread and went to sleep. I awoke hungry and sought the remainder. It was gone. The next day I put some bread underneath the straw and lay upon it pretending sleep. A light pattering of feet and shrill attenuated noises seemed to indicate a troop of tiny creatures in the darkness. A hairy coat swept my cheek and O the sickening horror of it!—the sharp teeth of a rat pierced my fingers. With staring sightless eyes, I understood. Rats raced over my body pushed beneath me in search for food, swept their cold tails over my sore face and grunted contentedly while eating the crumbs. I was often roused from the sleep of exhaustion by their shrill disputes or their nibbling my ears and fingers.

Chapter VIII

THE EXECUTION

IT has been said that our family were the martyrs of the Revolution. Our parents suffered but they had previously known happiness. But I? What earthly fruit of good had passed my lips? What wrong had I, an innocent boy, committed? As I daily sat in darkness awaiting my bread and water, what a world was revealed to me, Thérèse! Retributive justice demanding an eye for an eye stood in my dungeon. I was called upon to balance the accounts of my delinquent ancestry.

Man is a creature of habit. My senses daily grew more accustomed to the pestilential cavern. I began to distinguish the objects in my dungeon. Light seemed to gleam faintly through the joinings of the stones. My pupils dilated like those of nocturnal birds. My hearing grew more acute and recognized the jailer's footfall long before he reached my door. I could dimly hear the call of the sentinels and the tramping of the guard.

One night in spring I distinguished voices in the

ditch outside my cell and the dull sound of spades. Some one said, "Make it deeper and wider that it may hold the body." A platoon of soldiers halted and struck the breeches of their guns upon the ground. They were arranging an execution!

Only the wall separated us as a voice which was harsh yet timid, almost apologetic, pronounced a death sentence. The name of the condemned made me start: Louis Antoine Henri de Bourbon, Conte. Our family blood was about to spatter those walls erected by our ancestors. A sweet sonorous voice penetrated the stones. The Count was asking an officer to be the bearer of a death memento.

"For the Princesse de Rohan," he said, placing in his hands a letter, a ring and a lock of hair.

"Hang a lantern around his neck," was the brutal order that interrupted the prisoner. "No aim can be taken in this darkness."

Then followed a cruel fateful moment; then the order; then the rebounding of the balls from the outer wall of my dungeon; then the thud of the falling body; then suppressed oaths and stern commands; then the noise of spades. As the platoon of soldiers marched away, I said to myself, "My cousin, the Duke d'Enghien has been keeping me company, and now he lies very close."

No clothes had been given me during my im-

prisonment and I was in tatters. I shivered, wrapped in my filthy blanket. My hair hung on my shoulders in long matted curls; my face—beardless on entering the tower—was half covered with a tangled crop, my nails so long that they tore off in great shreds unless I gnawed them close with my teeth. I could not calculate the duration of my captivity. I seemed losing the power of thought. I lived over and over my cousin's execution until it seemed to have been my own. I assured myself that I was awakening after death and I felt the bullet wounds in my head. I refused nourishment, saying feebly that dead men required no food. On the third day of my self-imposed starvation the hinges of my door creaked at an unaccustomed hour and my jailer was communicative for the first time.

"Get up and follow me," he said.

I remained motionless, for was I not a corpse? The man raised me roughly and placed an arm around my shoulders. Then I comprehended that I lived and concluded that execution was about to take place. A great peace followed this conviction. When we reached daylight, the air asphyxiate dme like a powerful gas and when my guide opened a door, saying, "Here!" I fell on the floor in a swoon.

Chapter IX

THE ESCAPE

I REGAINED consciousness upon a real bed. Some people were near me. My jailer, with a softened expression, was handing me a cup of soup. I closed my eyes and realized that some one raised the sheet covering me and searched over my almost nude body for a birthmark. A voice said, "Thank God, it is he!" and human lips pressed my cadaverous hands.

The tower's warden said affably as he took his leave:

"Assure the Empress that he shall be well cared for."

A man near me murmured "Courage, courage, your Majesty."

My eyes opened and I clasped Montmorin in my arms.

"Your Majesty,"—he began, and I interrupted:

"Do not address me so, Eugene. Do not apply titles to a wretched outcast. I wish to strip myself

of the personality which has caused my martyrdom."

"Well, then, Charles," said Montmorin "I have sought you for four years."

"Four years!" I exclaimed. "Did I remain four years in the Black Hole?"

"I had no clue," said my friend. "I believed you dead, and through indifference concerning my own life, I enlisted in Napoleon's army. The execution of the Duc d'Enghien and the conspiracy of Cadouval (of which I shall presently tell you) filled me with such indignation that I resolved to present my resignation. Just then the Empress sent for me. In a secret interview she informed me that you were in Vincennes dungeon and commissioned me to rescue you. Her hand pushed aside the obstacles between us."

"Blessed be the creole!" I cried.

"Not so fast, Charles. She seeks only her security. Her lord, who is also the lord of Europe, seems to be considering the advisability of relegating her to some corner of his Babylonic Empire, because of her barrenness. She looks upon you as a fine card to play at the opportune moment. Napoleon has forgotten your existence. He is too busy with his conquests to even think of you. Here in prison, your name is No. 86. Jose-

phine pretends that you are the nephew of a Martinique woman with whom she has a friendship. She does not desire your liberty because it is preferable that you should be where she may at any time lay a hand upon you. But I shall free you, though that must be postponed, as you are now so weak."

I was bathed and cleanly clad. Nourishing and abundant food was given me daily and I was gently tended by Armande, the jailer's excellent daughter. Montmorin cut off my long hair and tangled beard, and, on viewing myself in the mirror, I realized that the cruel operation, whose object had been to disfigure me, had been frustrated by the darkness of the dungeon. I should, otherwise, have been marked as with the pits of that dreadful malady, the smallpox, and been changed past all recognition.

I was born again. The pure blood of Austria and Lorraine had successfully combated what appeared invincible obstacles. Montmorin, who through motives of caution, visited me only twice during my convalescence, was one day overjoyed on seeing my hard rounded flesh and observed that it was time to discuss our flight. I was on the second floor of one of the four towers which flank the historic castle. The windows facing to-

ward the fort were not very high from the ground. If the grating were filed, 'twould be a simple matter to swing down to the bridge spanning the ditch over which the soldiers walked in leaving the fortress. This route of exit was chosen by the soldiers in order to avoid the trouble of raising the portcullis, and it existed through the culpable negligence of the chief; otherwise, I should never have been able to have accomplished my escape. The only necessary precaution was that of selecting an auspicious hour of the night in which to swing down to the ditch, cross the narrow plank and join Montmorin in the woods beyond, awaiting me with a pair of good horses. I had an English file for the severing of my iron bars, also a rope and a dagger. All these I kept upon my body during the day and in my bed at night. I anxiously counted the hours that must pass before my escape and constantly developed my muscles by gymnastic exercises. Each night I cut through one bar of the grating. I feared that Armande, who was as kind to me as her father was indifferent, might suspect my intention. I therefore adopted toward her the most affectionate demeanor. I praised her beauty and then I realized that she was indeed beautiful. The wine of youth rose in me like a splendid springtide and when Armande

trembled in my arms I regretted that I must so soon leave her.

Thérèse, I know that your austere virtue makes no capitulation to what you would call the sentimental delinquencies of the heart. But to me a woman's breast is more necessary than bread or water. That simple girl loved me in the abandonment of her feminine pity, which is, my chaste sister, the holiest passion of humanity.

One day she responded to my caresses with the words:

"I know you are preparing to escape. I will help you, and if a cannon were to announce your flight, I should crawl into its mouth to retard the explosion."

When at last arrived the moment, preconcerted with Montmorin, she clung to me affectionately until the whistle of our accomplice sounded across the ditch. Then, securing the rope securely, she watched me descend, her low sweet voice bidding me Godspeed. I ran in a frenzy to Montmorin. We sprang into our saddles and sped away.

Chapter X

PRUSSIA

RENÉ was here seized with a fit of coughing. He looked toward the windows; they were closed; at the fireplace; the coke burned brightly. Putting down the manuscript, he soliloquized:

"I ought to examine the documents in the box and find out whether Naundorff is a martyr or a visionary."

But the narrative fascinated him and he resumed:

The aggregate terms of my prison life amount to seventeen years.

I said to Montmorin, as we slackened our speed, in order to find a path which led to an obscure hut wherein we were to pass the night:

"O that I might live among men, daring to breathe! That I might no longer be hunted down as a criminal. Let me cast away the fatal name and obliterate the race forever. Montmorin, renounce political schemes and help me only in

this,—to forget the dungeons that have been my dwelling places."

My friend put his arms around me and said: "I promise."

We slept soundly and started the next morning for Prussia, which we safely entered, under passports held by Montmorin. We put up at a small inn, exhausted from our rapid traveling. Just as we were dropping off to sleep, an officer entered, roughly ordering us from bed. He brought orders to arrest us as spies. He delivered us to a detachment of troops pertaining to the division under the command of the Duke of Brunswick.

When we had journeyed a short distance, we were surrounded by a body of French, treble our number, and I viewed a battle, for the first time in my life; by the irony of fate, I stood in ranks opposing my countrymen. Montmorin and I were ordered to fight and we had no choice but that of obeying. Our detachment was overpowered. The enemy cried, "No quarter!" Montmorin's horse was better than mine.

"Change with me!" he cried. I could not reply, for we all fell back together. My noble friend placed himself before me and sought to ward off the sabre-strokes. My horse fell pierced by a bullet and I could not extricate myself. Mont-

morin stooped to disentangle my foot and a French soldier with a tremendous blow cut his head in twain. Another sabre descended on my neck and I lost consciousness.

I awoke in a hospital, amid the fearful groans of the other wounded. Thérèse, does not my narrative seem destitute of those shades of gay and grave intermingled which constitute the charm of a personal history? Do you not long for a comic foil to this interminable tragedy? I shall abridge and hurry on.

I was carried in a straw-loaded wagon to the fortress Wessel and there placed with other prisoners destined to imprisonment in Toulon. I protested unavailingly, declaring that I was a Frenchman. I marched with bleeding feet into France. But falling on the ground in my inability to continue, I was abandoned by the guard and should have died but for the care of a peasant woman who carried me to a hospital. In a fellow patient, I recognized a former companion in arms, by name Fritz. Later on, we made our way back into Germany. To sustain life during our journey, we became common thieves and stole fruit, bread, chickens,—anything we could lay our hands on. Do you hear, Thérèse? Your brother has been a common thief. Fritz remarked: "We

do on a small scale what kings do on a great one." One day, leaving me his coat as hostage, he started off on a foraging expedition. He was captured by the German league known as the Strickreiter. An old peasant with whom we had become associated, advised that I should go to Saxony where the Strickreiter were not powerful. He gave me what food and money he could spare, and, carrying Fritz's coat, in which I found six hundred francs, I resolved to join the Prussian army, it seeming my only choice. I started for Berlin. On the journey a fellow traveller evinced great cordiality, to the extent of lending me his passport, bearing the name "William Naundorff." He declared he did not require it, being well known. I looked at this new friend intently. I had seen his face before.

Chapter XI

NAUNDORFF

WHAT was this new mystery? Why should this man give me his name, for I was forced to retain it? When we reached Weimar, my benefactor disappeared. The freedom I breathed inebriated me and I ceased wondering. On reaching Berlin, I put up at an inn, where I was soon visited by the police who asked how long I intended to remain in the capital. I referred them to the passport which I had delivered to the city's authorities and thus did I imbue myself forever with the personality of my fellow passenger. On filing an application for admission into the army, I was coldly informed that His Majesty did not receive foreigners into the Prussian ranks.

Discouraged and almost destitute, I bethought me of my knowledge of watchmaking and so it came to pass that I established myself in this humble business. Thérèse, this is the sign I displayed outside my door: Schutzenstrasse, 52. I was well patronized and lived contentedly until an

officer called to see my license. He asked me many questions, demanded to be shown my baptismal certificate and a testimonial of good conduct from the last parish in which I had lived. Having no such documents, I was in great perplexity. At this juncture, a woman who called herself Naundorff's sister, advised me to apply to Monsieur Le Coq, Superintendent of the Prussian Police and a Frenchman by birth. Before proceeding, I must explain that this woman, whose devotion to me was as genuine as it was unremitting, had some time previous come from some mysterious quarter to live in my house. Her industry made my slender income yield me some comfort. Following her advice, I wrote to Le Coq, revealing to him my entire history. He came to visit me and demanded to see the proofs of my identity. I showed him some of my documents,—those which had been sewed by Montmorin in the collar of the ragged coat which I had worn during my vagrancy. They included letters belonging to our mother and our father's seal. Le Coq was amazed and remarked that he could give me no advice until after consulting with the King. On the following day, he came to say that I must relinquish the documents. I was forced to obey, saving only a portion of the

seal. From that moment, I was dogged by the police and finally driven out of Berlin.

"You are in danger here," said Le Coq. "The magistracy has not forgotten that no corroborating documents rendered your passport valid. Go to some little town and be there known by the name of Naundorff."

A guard was furnished for my protection. I was admonished to observe the strictest reserve, for the eye of Napoleon was keen. Prussia dared not incur his enmity.

"When you are asked for your papers," said Le Coq, as I was departing, "answer that they are with the Court."

I went to Spandau in the search of peace, there to live in a coffin more effectual than the one which had enclosed me as I left the Tower, that is to say, the name "Naundorff." This spurious term was entered on the village registers. There is not another instance in Prussian annals of the right of citizenship being conferred upon a man in consequence of the arbitrary adjustment of an official, in the absence of documentary evidence.

I put out my sign. The faithful woman—the so-called sister of Naundorff—was with me still. However the arrangement had originated, whether or not she acted as an instrument of my enemies,

her devotion was genuine. To silence malicious tongues, I called her sister.

Europe was convulsed with war. "Is the Corsican's power to be broken?" I would ask myself. And then a wild hope of recovering my name and rank would take possession of me, in spite of the injunctions regarding caution from Le Coq, who visited me about this period. Then came the news of Napoleon's overthrow, followed by our uncle's ascending the throne and of your marriage, Thérèse, to our cousin, the Duke of Orleans. Thus did you become an accomplice in the usurpation. From many sources you and our uncle had tidings of my misfortunes, and these rumors were corroborated by documents found in the belongings of Josephine, Barras, Pichegru and even Napoleon. I at the time wrote letters to you both, letters which I know reached your hands. You, whose lips so often speak the name of God, dare not deny that you read my messages.

Chapter XII

THE DAUPHIN'S WIFE

ABOUT this time my companion and reputed sister died. Poor woman! She was no grande dame, not even a spotless matron. In her past there had been hours of anguish, despair and shame. An unremitting train of misfortunes had dried the sources of her tears. It was misfortune which had united our lives and welded my youth to her maturity. Despised by the world, she found an asylum in me, and I, in my isolation, found pity and kindness only in her. And I solemnly declare that she was gold hidden beneath mire, for she gave me the shelter and warmth of a human heart, without which I cannot live.

When she died in my arms, blessing me for my ministrations, I regretted that I had written to you, for it seemed the most fitting consummation of my life to pass the remainder of it as a Spandau watchmaker. In my loneliness, I married a beautiful girl, daughter of a mechanic as obscure as I. Having failed to receive an answer from you, I

thought to accomplish the extinction of a royal race by an alliance with this woman of the people. A frenzy of vengeance and shame mastered me as I cemented what I considered the pollution of your race and mine, by marrying this pure, gentle girl.

To-day I realize my sin in refusing to thank God for the finding in my path of the sweet blossom of love. Jeanne's affection should have been more grateful than Marie's for it came in consequence of the sublime law that merges one life into another and contained no element of reverence for royalty. But I trampled on the tender fragrance of her devotion during the beginning of our married life, in the arrogance of what I considered my fallen state in being her companion. For hours would I sit in gloomy silence. I could not smother the puerile vanity of earthly grandeur which even in the Black Hole inflated me. Between me and the gentle girl rose the high wall of ancestry, that destroyer of happiness, which seeks to make us unlike other men. I kept from her the gloomy secret of my origin and she shrank from me, almost seeking to ask my forgiveness for being my wife.

When I knew the joy which you will never experience, Thérèse—that of parenthood,—I called my daughter by the name which I had borne

during that ill-fated journey which cost our parents their crown and life,—"Amélie." My mother seemed to live again in the child, and I assured myself that the blood of Austria and Lorraine rose, asserting its purity and protesting against admixture with a plebeian strain.

Chapter XIII

THE INCENDIARY

HERE René raised his head and realized that his chamber was full of smoke. The atmosphere was growing dense, insufferable. The mirror over the mantel broke into pieces with a sharp explosion and great tongues of flame licked the sides of the chimney. A stout man with red whiskers put his head in the door, shouting "Fire!"

Thrusting the manuscript into his bosom, René ran out, amid the bewildered servants and guests. Pails of water were brought from the kitchen and uproar reigned.

"Keep your wits!" he shouted. "Shut the windows and wet the blankets from the beds."

He turned to some one near and asked how the fire had started. The man replied that Count Keller's valet was to blame. Brosseur standing in the passage way seemed inconsolable.

"I shall lose my place!" he almost sobbed. "My master will discharge me for this carelessness."

René was everywhere at once, encouraging, urging, advising. Brosseur, meanwhile ran into the Marquis's room, returning with the bed blankets. At last the fire was extinguished and the proprietor grasped René's hand, thanking him for his services. The guests pressed near with praises for his conduct. Even the cook brandished his colossal fists in fury at the stupidity of the fellow who had caused the mischief.

"I shall find him and break that heavy head of his!" he roared, darting toward Brosseur's chamber. A moment later he returned in a rage, exclaiming: "The rascal has escaped, leaving his baggage behind."

René shuddered, scarcely knowing why. He ran to his room in search for his wallet. It was broken open and the box gone.

"The villain has robbed me," he muttered, as the plot became clear to him. "I felt that I had seen his face before. Ah, Count Keller,—better said, Count Scoundrel—I know now whence you came. Have I indeed undone Amélie's father? Naundorff, watchmaker, I am henceforth your staunch partisan! This piece of villainy confirms your claim."

He placed his hand in his breast in search for the manuscript and breathed more easily on feeling it.

Book III

THE KNIGHTS OF LIBERTY

Chapter I

LYING IN WAIT

OPPOSITE the Dover wharf was an inn bearing the sign: The Red Fish. The frequenters of this inn were usually sailors, wharf-hands, etc. . . . Sometimes passengers from a recently arrived vessel stayed over a short while for the purpose of recovering from seasickness. At eleven in the forenoon of a day following soon after that described at the close of Book II, Kate, niece of the proprietor, displayed her rounded arms to the admiring eyes of the guests seated in the dingy dining hall, as she deposited on the tables bottles of beer and dishes of smoked salmon stewed with potatoes. One of the young men was so absorbed in gazing through a window out toward the wharf that he scarcely knew what he ate. He seemed waiting for some one and in so doing attracted the attention of two others seated in an obscure corner of the apartment, one of whom was apparently of some thirty years of age, of contracted lips, keen eyes and a nervous atti-

tude. His general make-up was that of a man who vibrates to the suggestions of an idea. He scarcely ate and his glass of ale stood untasted. His companion had a very good appetite—a handsome young man somewhat coarse in type, of splendid proportions, ruddy cheeks, black whiskers, gleaming teeth and gay alert eyes full of directness and candor.

The two men conversed in low tones. The younger always interrupted the talk on the approach of Kate, for the purpose of making sweet speeches in her ear.

"Indeed I recognize him," declared the elder. "I have seen him in Paris and his title is Marquis de Brezé. His family is ultramonarchical and its loyalty has been paid in gold, for its confiscated property has been restored."

"I wonder why he is here."

"I cannot guess, Giacinto. Men in our position must always expect the worst. Many Frenchmen await their vessels in this inn, but the Marquis's attitude arouses suspicion. He awaits some one. The fact that he comes from *There* should put us on our guard."

"Bah!" exclaimed Giacinto, with a flash of his perfect teeth, "'tis some piece of gallantry—a question of petticoats."

"Or of politics. We must not lose sight of him, for holding on to the end of a thread sometimes leads to a bobbin. This inn, in which *our* Volpetti is in the habit of stopping, is so suspicious a place that even the air is infected. If the Marquis awaits a lady, luck to him! But if not——"

"I swear 'tis love," asserted Giacinto, failing to comprehend the other's indifference to the romantic.

"Well, now let us get to business. If our brother knights have correctly informed us, Volpetti will reach the inn today. Are you sure you will recognize him? You know the fox is clever in disguises."

"Do you think he can escape me?" cried Giacinto, his face distorted with a spasm of hatred. "Not even if he comes as the devil, his brother. Why we are both Sicilians from Catania. I remember him when he walked barefoot recruiting victims for the gambling houses. Later on he entered the novitiate of a monastery. Then, I witnessed his initiation as spy—under the direction—well in reality, in the employ of Queen Caroline. O he is an adept, a born spy and happy only when exercising his profession. He was Fouché's most dangerous agent and now performs the same office to Lecazes. But to every

man his hour! There are many accounts pending between Volpetti and me! First, my brother Raphael's long imprisonment; secondly, the ill treatment of Grazia, that unfortunate girl; thirdly, the splendid Romeldi's death on the gibbet; fourthly, the conspiracy of the 19th of August. Why has this mission been assigned me? Because the Knights know well that Volpetti will not escape me."

"Contain yourself" said the other. "To accomplish your purpose, calmness is essential."

"Fear nothing," answered Giacinto, "I shall seem ice."

"Does Volpetti know you by sight?"

"As well as he does his own shirt, and his claws must have fastened into me at Trieste, if the Knights had not protected me. Set a thief to catch a thief. But here in England he and I are man to man."

"Even in England spies are aided by other spies. Change your tactics, Giacinto. The devil! Lecazes snaps his fingers at scruples. The League must learn that the enemy is full of insidious perfidy. We no longer fight on the open as in the times of Napoleon. But the duel between Revolution and Reaction is raging none the less fiercely. The hour is ripe for blows and

are we, the Knights of Liberty, to content ourselves with Platonic phrases? Are we not to wreak vengeance at last? We are so numerous as scarcely to know one another and yet so little is accomplished. 'Tis a competent leader that we need."

"Platonism is dead," cried Giacinto. "Our business is to grapple with the police. Volpetti's fate will soon be a warning to Lecazes and those who are his masters. Every English Carbonaro will soon see that events are at last shaping themselves—"

"What do you know?" eagerly demanded the other.

"I scent the critical moment approaching. I read men's thoughts upon their foreheads. My friend, societies do much, but at times one man arises who by a swift stroke accomplishes what societies are only meditating."

"You assume the air of a prophet."

"Well, time will tell. Now to our work. Volpetti will soon arrive, either alone or with a companion. He is to embark from Dover. When he reaches this inn, you and I shall enter his room and dispatch him before he has time to say 'Amen.' The Polipheme awaits us in the harbor. The captain is our brother and con-

federate. I trust Volpetti will come alone for so he will fall to me; but if he be accompanied, both of us shall be implicated."

"And why not both of us even if he come alone? Should one waste honor on dogs?"

Here Giacinto interrupted, saying:

"Did I not tell you it was a love affair? Behold the lady!"

The Marquis de Brezé had just hurried to meet two new comers, a man of middle age and a young girl. Both wore shabby traveling garments and had the appearance of Irish peasants. But in spite of her clothes, the beautiful imperious face of the girl immediately excited admiration while the man's grace and dignity revealed the aristocrat.

Giacinto grasped his friend's hand, and the other whispered:

"How remarkable!"

"What?" asked Giacinto.

"The resemblance."

"What resemblance?"

"Why the man and girl are reproductions of the guillotined king and queen."

"I have seen them only in pictures; but by the devil! they are indeed before us."

The Carbonari gazed at each other in amazement

Chapter II

THE TRAPPED FOX

NAUNDORFF and Amélie followed de Brezé toward the stairway and, in so doing, passed the two Carbonari, who, pretending absorption in their ale and salmon, did not raise their eyes.

René led his friends to the chambers he had engaged for them and when the doors were closed, he threw himself upon his knees before the father exclaiming:

"Forgive me!"

"What is it, René?"

"I have been robbed of your papers."

Naundorff turned pale and fell against the wall. But quickly recovering himself, he said:

"René, you have lost my name, but you first saved my life," and with simple dignity he drew the Marquis to his breast while Amélie trembled and dropped tears from her beautiful eyes.

"And the manuscript?"

"I have it with me."

"How were you robbed of the box?"

René explained.

"That Count de Keller is my evil genius. He is none other than the Volpetti who under the alias 'Naundorff' bestowed that name upon me in Prussia. He represents the police who like a web envelop me. 'Twas the police that directed the blows from which you rescued me in London. And that police will now pursue you, René. I regret that we have undertaken this voyage, for how are we to succeed in this difficult undertaking, having lost my certificates of identity? Let us renounce the project and return, I to exile and you to your country. I am not safe in England; therefore I shall remove to Holland. In that land of liberty and justice, I may find the happiness I seek, the simple happiness of family life. René, I seem to hear again the words spoken to me in my dungeon: *Your friends shall perish.*"

René looked at Amélie. Her tears were dry and her lofty countenance expressed only resolution. His discouragement was swept away and he turned to the father, saying:

"I shall never give up the fight. And what of the knave who robbed me? Is he to laugh in my face? Listen. Volpetti will soon be here. I also

have become a spy. I have tracked him by pouring out torrents of money."

"Bravo, my René!" said Amélie, giving him her hand.

"Girl," sighed Naundorff, "you have inherited the intrepidity of your grandmother, Marie Antoinette and great-grandmother, Marie Thérèse, combined; I, the stoicism and passivity of my father. While I am with you, my blood rises and I believe in the impossible; my fears vanish, my dual personality merges into one and I assure myself that I am not a self-duped fool—God bless you!"

"Father," she exclaimed, "you have not the right to surrender claims which your children inherit. Do you think that the iniquitous régime on the French throne will last indefinitely? Has not that wonderful colossus, Napoleon, rolled on the ground from his pedestal? Another usurper today rules our country. Is his hour never to come?"

She was a picture of splendid anger and sublime indignation.

"Amélie, you frighten me," said Naundorff.

"Cast away your fears," she cried. "René will save us. Defenders will spring out of the earth. Courage, my father; calmness, my husband,"

and she gave a hand to each of the men. "We are a council of war. Let us plan our course of action."

Naundorff kissed her forehead, saying: "I follow you," fascinated by her spirit.

"Our two aims," she proceeded, "are to recover the papers and enter France secretly."

"Regarding the first," said René, "trust to me. The spy shall not return to France enriched by his spoils."

"Beware of the spilling of blood!" said Naundorff. "Our cause is else lost."

René and Amélie made no rejoinder.

"Concerning the voyage to France," continued the Marquis, "we must first dispose of Volpetti. Were he to precede us, our fate should be imprisonment. In the meanwhile, Mr. and Miss O'Ranleigh," and he made his companions a mock bow, "must not forget their rôle of musicians journeying across the channel in search of employment. A happy circumstance favors our project. A French merchant vessel, the Polipheme, lies in the harbor. The captain is indebted to me for favors. I met him on the wharf this morning and observed that I might have need of him later. I can count upon his loyalty."

"Father, the sky grows clear!" cried Amélie.

"God grant it may!" said Naundorff.

"See!" exclaimed René. "There is the Polipheme."

He drew his companions toward the window, and as they looked out, his face grew dark and he stammered:

"There—he—comes!"

Volpetti, alias the Count de Keller, in elegant traveling dress which accentuated his aristocratic Chateaubriand air, approached the Red Fish, followed by Brosseur.

"They are coming here!" exclaimed René, and he dragged Amélie and Naundorff into concealment, returning himself to continue his scrutiny. "The devil turns him over to me at last."

Chapter III

RENÉ WAITS

THE Marquis's elation was equalled by that of the Carbonari below on beholding the entry of Volpetti and his servant.

"We have him," whispered Giacinto.

"And his confederate, also," answered Louis Pierre, which was the name of the other.

"He seems quite a muscular fellow."

"Leave him to me."

Kate was selecting chambers for the newly arrived. Giacinto, continuing the rude gallantry he had begun at the table, followed her from room to room, whispering love speeches and pinching her round arms. Volpetti and Brosseur were drinking Malaga below.

"Leave me alone!" cried Kate, pretending anger.

"Darling, don't be so hard on me."

"But I have work to do. These rooms must be got ready, and I have not been able to find them yet for the house is as full as an egg."

"Let me walk with you until we find them, then."

She could not resist this gallant offer, and together they promenaded through corridors and apartments. At last she said:

"Well, I must give No. 10 to the master and 39 to the valet. They are not close together, but 'tis not my fault."

"Who is in No. 8?" asked Giacinto, idly.

"'Tis a double apartment, occupied by two Irish people who look like beggars. But a French Monsieur here has his eye on the girl. He spent a long time with them today."

"Let them love each other. So do you and I."

As the pair descended the stairway, Volpetti and his valet were coming up to their chambers. Giacinto kept well in the shade and hastened to join Louis Pierre beside whom a pleasant-faced man stood, dispatching a glass of rum.

This was the captain of the Polipheme.

"Do you wish to leave tonight?" asked the captain.

"Or at dawn," replied Louis Pierre. "Be prepared to draw in anchor and have the sloop in readiness guarded by but one sailor."

The captain hesitated. He drew his fingers through his hair as if about to object.

"Well—" he began.

"Captain Soliviac, do you realize that you *cannot* refuse?"

"Refuse? Impossible! I was about to say that there are some people in this inn wishing also to go to France. Do you object to their presence?"

"Who are these people for whom you have so high a regard, Captain?"

"Well one of them is the Marquis de Brezé."

The Carbonari started.

"What bond unites you to that sympathizer of the government?"

"No political bond. My father was befriended by the elder Marquis and the young man has been my protector. Important matters urge his return to France."

"Indeed! Well, the son of the Duchess de Rousillon is a strange companion for you, Captain."

"Pshaw!" answered Soliviac. "He does not meddle with politics. His time is occupied in hunting and love making. He is doubtless hurrying to France to be reunited with some fair friend; or more likely still, the lady accompanies him now, for he said that two Irish travelers, an uncle and niece, were with him."

The Carbonari exchanged a look; then Giacinto said:

"Well, tell the Marquis he and his party may come."

"I have received another application for passage," said the captain, "which I have refused."

"From whom?"

"From a gentleman bearing a marvelous resemblance to our countryman, the Viscount Chateaubriand. He has a stout fellow with him who must be his valet."

The Carbonari flashed a look at one another.

"How long since did he ask you?"

"Not five minutes ago; I was jumping from my sloop. He wears a long traveling cloak and a broad winged hat."

"Well, run up to number 10," said Giacinto. "He is there. Call out roughly, saying that two passengers have failed you at the eleventh hour and that you may now carry him and his servant. Demand a high price and simulate avarice. Be cautious. The man is a reader of faces."

"Suppose he asks which is to be the first landing place?"

"Say Dieppe, adding that he may be put off at Calais, Havre or Cherbourg if he prefer and pay well for the privilege. Act as tho your object were

to exploit him." And Giacinto's face glowed with hatred. "And if he asks the hour of departure, say midnight and that he must be at the wharf by eleven, where the sloop will await him."

"I shall do as you say. Is that all?"

"I think not, indeed. Is your crew to be trusted?"

"In what sense?" asked the astonished captain.

"Will they keep mum about whatever takes place on board?"

"My men are absolutely to be trusted."

"Very well," said Louis Pierre, "I shall board the sloop at dusk and remain upon her until the gentleman and his servant arrive. You must have a sailor's dress ready for me, for I shall help run the sloop. You must be there also, Captain."

"Very well," said Soliviac.

"Are you ready to go all lengths?" asked Giacinto.

The captain's frank, genial countenance became clouded. Corsair as he was and accustomed to bloody adventures, he hesitated before the executive justice of the Knights of Liberty, for he knew their vengeance to be terrible. But raising his head, he said:

"All lengths."

"Captain," said Giacinto, "the man we track

is worse than a wolf. He merits a thousand deaths and we shall give him only one. If you desert us, we shall consider that you cease to be a Knight. Nevertheless, we shall take the matter into our own hands and trust you not to betray us."

"Do you think I have joined the Knights to play the coward at the first test? I unconditionally agree to your proposition. And now, what of the other passengers?"

"Arrange that they board before or after Volpetti."

Soliviac bowed.

Meanwhile, the Marquis's eye was applied to the keyhole of Volpetti's chamber, and watched that gentleman arrange his belongings. His wallet and toilet case lay near. René reflected that his treasure might be in either. Soon he was undeceived for he heard Volpetti say to Brosseur:

"Where is it?"

"Around my neck," and the valet pointed to a cord just visible above his collar. René could scarcely contain himself as a prospect of swift vengeance seemed near and he clutched Amélie's hand as she stood back of him, erect and self-possessed.

Chapter IV

MINE AND COUNTERMINE

A MORE circumspect man than René would have retired from the keyhole after ascertaining this information, but he was transported into remaining. Just then Soliviac entered by the main door offering to take the Count and his valet to France on the Polipheme. His intention was to land at Dieppe, he remarked, unless Monsieur preferred some other port, in which case—

He played his part well. Volpetti fell into the snare and requested to be put off at Havre, offering a good sum for the privilege.

"Providence has delivered this man into my hands," exclaimed René, overjoyed.

Volpetti agreed to be aboard by midnight, and on the departure of Soliviac, continued his preparations for the journey. He instructed Brosseur to have supper brought up to him, adding:

"Keep your ears open to what is said in the kitchen."

Soliviac was, meanwhile, being instructed by

the Carbonari to take the Marquis and his friends aboard at an early hour. The captain accordingly sought René, informing him of what time he was expected. The Marquis answered:

"The Irish gentleman and lady will be at the ship by that hour, Soliviac. But I am not certain of going. If I do, I shall get to your vessel by means of a small skiff."

The Carbonari frowned when Soliviac repeated these words to them. Louis Pierre remarked:

"Deeper springs than love move the Marquis."

"I warned him," said Soliviac, that he must be on time, else the Polipheme would sail without him, and he answered that he did not imagine that the vessel would leave before midnight."

The Carbonari exchanged a keen glance, and Giacinto said:

"Let him do as he is minded, but keep your eyes open. This is to be our program: I remain ashore to track Volpetti and his servant. You, Captain, and Louis Pierre will be aboard the sloop. If Brezé happens to see us and asks to be taken aboard, he must be refused, on pretext of lack of room. Now, each man to his business."

A half hour later, René descended the stairway accompanied by Miss O'Ranleigh, her face hidden by a large bonnet. Mr. O'Ranleigh fol-

lowed, his hat pulled well over his forehead, and his coat collar high over his neck. But the keen eyes of Louis Pierre again perceived the resemblance and he muttered:

"Accursed race!—Race which has brought reproach and invasion to France!—But who is this pair? And why does that young aristocrat pay them court?"

As the two Carbonari walked down the wharf later in the evening, Louis Pierre said:

"I am more strongly convinced that this is no love adventure. Be cautious, Giacinto. You stay behind to strike the blow."

Following them came the Marquis and the two Irish passengers. René bade his friends farewell for a brief while, saying to the girl in a low voice:

"Fear nothing. I shall succeed."

"I wonder if this is a countermine, a cord set to entangle our own net," meditated Giacinto.

He followed the Marquis to the inn, which reached, the latter ran immediately to his own room. Giacinto concluded to await René's exit before carrying out his own plan, namely to hide in the apartment next to Volpetti's and which had been that of the Irish guests. Just as he was about to realize this scheme, the Marquis stepped in before him. For fifteen

years he had awaited this moment of revenge. He had entered the ranks of the Knights of Liberty, the nucleus of the Carbonari, for the sole purpose of wreaking vengeance on his countryman. A formidable power was back of him, transforming him from an ordinary homicide into the avenger of a cause. And now he was being cheated out of his due by this unforeseen complication. He stood in the passage a half hour waiting for the Marquis to come forth. At last he went down to supper and Kate hurried to wait upon him. She marveled at his abstraction and tried coquettishly to rouse him.

"Have you seen a black cat's shadow?" she asked, alluding to a local superstition.

Giacinto abstractedly caressed her coarse hand.

"Tell me," he said, "does the French gentleman leave tonight? I mean the one who first arrived."

"What business is that of yours?" she asked, annoyed at her lover's coldness.

"Because," said the Sicilian in a passionate tone, "if he goes I must leave you, my darling, for we sail together."

"He leaves tonight and the other also, No. 10. But, if you prefer to stay, other vessels will leave tomorrow."

Giacinto gazed into her eyes with promise.

Then, dashing off the Chianti, he ran to his room, smiling at the credulity of servant maids. He threw on his cloak, tied a sash around his waist, into which he thrust a pair of pistols, grasped a thick stick, glided out of the hotel and was soon lost in the mist.

Chapter V

THE CREAKING BOOTS

THE night grew darker and the mist denser. At half past eleven, Volpetti, followed by Brosseur, took the road leading to the wharf, the latter carrying the traveling bags and other baggage. Volpetti had the box of documents and Brosseur grumbled at the heaviness of his own load, which prevented his keeping up with his master. Being scarcely able to see him, he followed by listening to the creaking of his boots. But he was obliged to walk so slowly that the creaking became fainter and fainter, seeming finally to die out altogether. Suddenly, he heard boots again and hurried on, succeeding at last in overtaking the owner of them; just then this owner turned and, with no warning, dealt Brosseur a blow on the head so effective that the valet rolled over into the mud, emitting only a smothered bellow. René leaned over his victim, turning on the light from his lantern. A stream of blood tricked down his face and he seemed insensible. Thrusting his

hand into Brosseur's breast and pockets, he extracted a bunch of keys. With these he opened the wallets, but no box did he find. Then, shaking the fellow, to convince himself that he was still unconscious, René hurried after Volpetti. A moment later Giacinto stumbled upon the wounded man.

"The Marquis knows how to strike!" he exclaimed. "But he has yet to learn how to remove his victims." And the Sicilian flung the baggage out into the sea. Then, with the greatest difficulty, he pushed the half living body of his enemy over the embankment into the water.

"Santa Maria be praised! The danger is over," and, crossing himself, he hurried on.

When Volpetti heard, instead of Brosseur's heavy tread, light feet very near him, he instinctively clasped the box to his breast and clutched his dagger. Then he turned, calling out:

"Brosseur! Rascal! Where are you?"

For answer, a heavy blow descended on his head. Volpetti grasped his pistol and turned, but his adversary flung his strong arms around him, seized the pistol, which he pressed to the other's head, saying:

"Give me the box or I shall blow your brains out."

Volpetti struggled and tried to reach his dagger, but René twisted the refractory arm until it snapped in the socket, making its owner roar with pain. Louis Pierre had just leaped ashore, and, guided by the commotion of the struggle, he ran to the group, which he expected to consist of the two Italians.

Just then Giacinto ran up, crying gleefully:

"Aha! Do you recognize Giacinto Palli? Let us throw him into the sea."

"Not here," said Louis Pierre, binding his hands and feet. "He might save himself."

"We can hang weights to him."

"Where is the servant?"

"The fat fellow? He is saying his prayers with the fish."

"Are you two men the enemies of this spy?" asked René.

"To the death," replied Giacinto, gagging his enemy with a pocket handkerchief.

"Mine also. He has robbed me like a dog. I must leave Dover tonight for this deed."

"Do you promise to maintain absolute secrecy concerning what occurs aboard the Polipheme tonight?"

"I give you a gentleman's word," replied René.

The three men lifted the never so helpless, but still lucky, Volpetti down the stairway aboard the sloop in waiting.

Chapter VI

THE PARDON

NAUNDORFF and Amélie, from the Polipheme's deck, watched the men carrying Volpetti to the sloop. They trembled and clasped hands. The vessel was anchored in deep water and the waves rocked her from side to side. The night was cold and damp. Amélie shivered, chilled by the spray. Just then the guard announced the arrival of the sloop and René's voice triumphantly called across the waters:

"Amélie! Amélie!"

She ran to the vessel's side as the rope ladder was thrown down and saw what seemed to be a dead body, borne by her lover and his companion. On reaching deck, René rapturously kissed Amélie's hand and then triumphantly handed Naundorff the box.

"Drop anchor!" called out the captain, and the Polipheme rode away from the English coast. Meanwhile Amélie, Naundorff, René, the captain, and the two Carbonari gathered in the cabin.

Punch was ordered, for they were all soaking wet and had need of a stimulant. The liquor sparkled with the tossing of the vessel and a sense of good fellowship diffused itself among the ship's company, some of whom a few hours earlier were unknown to one another. With her customary resolution, Amélie took the initiative:

"Gentlemen, we must understand each other. My father and I are not Irish travelers seeking employment in France. We are French outlaws, the police on our trail, and a mighty party seeking to exterminate us. The man lying bound on deck is a villain who robbed us of our certificates, the documents entitling us to our inheritance. The Marquis de Brezé, my affianced lover, has recovered these papers. Am I correct in inferring that you have aided him?"

"Mademoiselle," replied Giacinto, "the veriest coincidence has united our projects. The Marquis has a strong arm but lacks caution. I cast his first victim into the sea or we should not now be securely riding away from Dover. O royal punch!" he cried, draining his glass.

"The second victim," remarked Louis Pierre, "will also sleep in the water, but we are first to extract his secrets. What think you, Captain?"

"'Tis the only solution, my friend," replied Soliviac gravely.

"'Tis a lamentable necessity," added René.

"Say, rather, a mild retaliation," insisted Giacinto.

Amélie's glance was of an avenging archangel.

Naundorff rose to his feet and towered above them all. His voice rose in an appeal, a supplication: "No blood! No blood! Let us forgive!"

"Forgive that unscrupulous creature?—that instrument of tyrants?" exclaimed Louis Pierre.

"He has betrayed and tortured the innocent," said Soliviac solemnly.

"He brought my brother to the scaffold " cried Giacinto.

"He sought the death of my father," said Amélie.

Then, in chorus, they cried:

"He must die!"

Silence followed. The captain poured out another glass of punch. Amélie and René drew apart from the group and engaged in a lover's colloquy. The three Carbonari talked animatedly of the accomplishment of their plans. When, later, Amélie turned her eyes in search of her father and failed to find him, she concluded he had gone to rest or that he chose to protest by his absence

against the general sentiment regarding Volpetti.

Meanwhile, Naundorff was staggering along the vessel's deck, as she tossed roughly, in the direction of the bound spy, who lay near a heap of cordage where he had been deposited by his captors. His handsome face was contracted with rage, which increased as he saw the watch-maker approach. He believed that his last hour had arrived. Naundorff bent over him, saying in a low voice:

"I have come to set you free."

Volpetti's eyes flashed amazement.

"Listen!" said his liberator, cutting the cords with his pen knife. "I forgive you that God may forgive me. Your life has been a series of iniquities. You have made me suffer so greatly that I have almost doubted the existence of God. When you are free, change your mode of life. Here you will surely be killed. Cast yourself overboard, for you may be rescued by some other vessel. Do not stir yet. Be very quiet."

He had already freed Volpetti's hands. He now cut the cords binding his legs and feet. The spy muttered:

"Harebrained imbecile!"

During this critical moment his past life rose before him. *He* change? Impossible! He was

a spy by nature. When a school boy, he had spied upon and delivered up his playfellows. While a novice in the monastery, he had spied upon his brothers. Turned out of the monastery by the Revolution, he had spied upon the revolutionists. His education and inclinations fitted him for the life, and the present atmosphere was auspicious, or 'twas the golden age of the secret police. The true history of that epoch will never be written because certain knaves carried it with them to the grave. When Volpetti entered the ranks of the secret police, he displayed signal talent. According to a remark made at the time by a prominent official, he was not only the eyes and ears but also the arm of the government. The swift eye of Vidocq early discerned the wonderful gifts of this king among spies: his art in ingratiating himself into the good graces of his employers; his genius at disguises and every species of simulation; his alertness in forming intimacies with the familiars of those who were his predestined victims. In short, he was a born spy and his machinations were labors of love. He was furnished money, agents and whatever other auxiliaries he demanded. His astuteness had discovered countless plots, effected the capture of a multitude of conspirators, among these General Doyenne, who suicided in prison,

rather than submit to the ignominy of picket torture.

No need to say that in the heart of Volpetti there was no room for gratitude or remorse. He held goodness to be weakness, and forgiveness imbecility. That Naundorff should forgive the many years of persecution suffered at his hands, was to him incomprehensible. Why, the tracking of Naundorff had been his specialty for half a lifetime, his supreme title to glory. He viewed him now with Satanic disdain as he loosed his bonds.

Volpetti's only gods were Destiny and Fatality. Since leaving London, Fatality had seemed to be in the atmosphere. When earlier he was carried on deck, bound and gagged, he had in a rage called himself a fool for being trapped. But now Fatality seemed to be on the side of Naundorff and Volpetti reflected:

"This man has been overtaken a thousand times. He is a bright mark for the arrows of Fate."

Naundorff, meanwhile, repeated the regal formula of pardon;

"*I forgive you that God, who is over you and me and all men, may extend to me his mercy,—God who sees us and to whom your evil deeds are known as well as the moment in which his hand will reduce*

you to naught. I forgive you because it is my destiny to forgive and to expiate, and I am ready to fulfil it; but I warn you to tempt Providence no longer."

Volpetti felt his limbs free and his blood resume its normal circulation. He commenced to remove his clothes, Naundorff, meanwhile, concealing him. Crawling to the edge of the vessel, he leaped into the water and the deck guard sang out, "Man overboard!"

Chapter VII

THE REVELATION

THIS cry always throws crew and passengers into wild excitement, all of whom now appeared as if by magic on deck. The fog was beginning to break but the water still dashed madly against the sides of the vessel. In the general confusion no one asked how the accident had occurred, but the mate beckoned the captain aside and whispered:

" 'Tis the prisoner who is overboard and that passenger," pointing toward Naundorff, "unloosed him. I did not interfere because I did not realize what he was about."

Muttering a curse, Soliviac approached Naundorff.

"What do you mean, Monsieur? In the devil's name, how have you dared to set the prisoner free? Pernies, are you sure that this gentleman—Well, however that be, bind him securely. Now, cock your guns, and if that scoundrel swims near us, send him to the bottom with a bullet through his head."

The sailors leaned over the edge, seeking to distinguish the floating body among the waves which rose more and more furiously. The wind, increasing with the fury of the waves, swept away the clouds and the surface of the sea gleamed almost white. One of the Breton sailors, a kind of wild-cat fellow, with green eyes which saw by night, cried out that a man was floating near the vessel, whereupon four bullets were sent in that direction. Two youths, by name Yvon and Hoel, lowered a canoe and were after the fugitive within ten minutes.

Naundorff, guarded, almost a prisoner, calmly awaited results. René and Amélie stood near him for the purpose of defending him, were it necessary, but they could not conceal their terror and anger at the spy's escape.

"You have undone us, father," said Amélie.

"We struggle vainly," said René. "If that man saves his life, may the sea swallow the rest of us, for we should have a fate more terrible than death. No country of earth could afford a refuge. To what end have I recovered the documents? I, a de Brezé, a Giac, performing the office of a common murderer!"

Naundorff remained silent. Just then there

rang out from the watchman a cry: "Ship to the larboard."

The encounter with another vessel is always an important occurrence at sea. At that period the memory was fresh of combats with corsairs, English, French, and Spanish. But the proximity of this ship was a consideration of greater than ordinary gravity, for it signified the probable salvation of the fugitive, whose body now gleamed on the surface.

Soliviac growled:

"I wager that the rascal will be picked up."

Then the ship hove in sight like a black bird, now skimming, now flying, now keeling. She was a schooner somewhat larger than the Polipheme. She could be perfectly discerned, for the night had become clear. The floating man cried out and she slackened speed and flung out a cable. The sailors were about to fire. Soliviac restrained them saying, that they would surely miss their aim and alarm the other vessel. Impotent and raging, the Knights of Liberty beheld the spy's salvation as his nude body gleamed against the schooner's dark side.

"He is saved!" they almost wailed.

"He is receiving a welcome!" growled the sailors as they turned menacingly upon Naundorff,

Soliviac the most infuriated of the group. Clutching the watchmaker by the collar, he roared:

"Who are you to liberate prisoners aboard my vessel? Are you that villain's accomplice? Well, by God, you shall suffer the fate reserved for him."

"He deserves it," cried Giacinto. "This man, a stranger to us has been entrusted with our secret. This serves us right for letting others meddle in our business."

Amélie flung herself before her father and de Brezé stood beside her. Soliviac motioned to certain sailors and they immediately overpowered René, tho he struggled hard to free himself.

Up to this time Naundorff had remained silent, but, fearing the consequences to his friend, he advanced, saying:

"Captain, release the Marquis. I shall explain my action. I beg to be heard in the cabin, with only these gentlemen as witnesses," motioning towards the Carbonari. The captain ordered René's release and the party descended the stairway, Soliviac following Naundorff. On reaching the cabin, Louis Pierre and Giacinto stood on each side of the captain, as tho forming a court.

"You are," said Soliviac, addressing Naundorff, "a culprit. On my vessel, I administer justice and hold myself accountable only to God. You have

constituted yourself the accomplice of a man condemned to death. As you have set him free, 'tis only justice that you should take his place, for his freedom means the death of the rest of us. But before passing sentence, I shall listen to your defence."

"Permit me to say—" interposed René, but Soliviac interrupted with firmness:

"It is the prisoner who must answer."

Naundorff raised his head and replied: "I neither explain my conduct nor excuse myself, I liberated Volpetti because I had the right to do so."

"The right!" exclaimed the astounded Carbonari, thinking they heard a lunatic.

"Yes, the right," insisted Naundorff. "The right to forgive belongs to the most grievously offended and to none of you has that man brought such evil as to me. Were I to describe what he has made me suffer, you would comprehend the extent of human baseness. But there are no words in which to describe that suffering. He buried me in a dungeon during the best years of my youth; he took my name from me and almost my life; only a few days since he directed the arms of assassins upon me. 'Tis I have the right to forgive him,—I and none other. Be it known to you, Captain Soliviac, that were forgiveness ban-

ished from the earth, it should find asylum in my breast. My mission is to forgive; my duty, to prevent, even at the loss of my life, the spilling of a drop of blood. I have finished. Do with me as you will."

The Carbonari exchanged looks; in spite of their resentment, Naundorff awed them. At last, Soliviac, somewhat nonplussed exclaimed:

"The devil, Monsieur! That speech is very fine, but there are times when forgiveness of one man is condemnation to many others. That man's life costs our death."

"And mine also," said Naundorff, tears trickling down his face, "and that of my children."

"He raves!" exclaimed Giacinto. "Have we not listened sufficiently long to the drivelings of a madman? I am sorry for this fine young lady, but our business must be dispatched."

Soliviac assented and then addressed Naundorff:

"We shall believe your story, Monsieur, through an excess of credulity, tho who will assure us that you are not a spy yourself, ingeniously disguised? The case is this: that scoundrel owes you his liberty. How are you to explain that?"

Naundorff moved back, and, with deliberate, majestic dignity, removed his hat, cast off his cloak and stepped into the full light of the cabin's

lamp. The three Carbonari, completely taken back, uttered a cry of amazement and uncovered in deference to royalty.

Chapter VIII

THE CAPTAIN

AN hour later Naundorff sat surrounded by the three Carbonari, to whom he had related his entire history. Pity and amazement were upon their faces; Louis Pierre seemed stirred out of his taciturnity. On the table lay the open box from which had been taken the documents corroborating the recital. But these papers had scarcely been necessary, for the Carbonari believed Naundorff blindly.

"What a blow is tyranny to receive!" exclaimed Louis Pierre. "'Tis the man who sits upon the throne today that invited foreign troops into our country. Now shall we brand his forehead with the blister of usurpation and fraud. When I longed to inflict upon the House a terrible punishment, I little dreamed that God reserved one so complete, and that I—*we* should be the instruments."

Then Giacinto spoke:

"*We*, who are an invincible force, make the

cause of Naundorff our own cause. We shall be its defenders even against himself, if he should again seek to overthrow it. What say you, Soliviac? I answer for it that our brothers shall as one stand by him. Ah, we carry on the Polipheme a revelation to our country. To the believing we carry faith; to the incredulous proofs," and he motioned toward the documents.

Amélie's clear voice interposed:

"Gentlemen, formulate no plans, foster no hopes. Are you counting on disembarking on French soil? That spy living and free, there is not a safe spot in Europe."

"Mademoiselle speaks the truth," assented Giacinto, who gazed fascinated upon her imperious beauty and splendid poise. "Our danger is great."

"Until now," she continued, "no one has suspected the existence of these papers, which are of a nature to turn the tide of history. My father had no intention of making use of them. He wished to owe his success to the generosity of his sister, and he still trusts to that generosity. But Volpetti knows our secret and he will set forces in motion to wrest this last guarantee from us. He will not scruple as to means, even though our lives be the price. Instead, therefore, of dreaming of

splendid victories and dashing revenges, let us think of a refuge. Captain Soliviac, head the vessel toward Dunkirk, for any other spot of France would be our sepulchre. Not even in Holland should we be safe."

Naundorff buried his face in his hands. The reproach implied in Amélie's words cut him deeply. Tho his heart approved his extravagant magnanimity, he realized that in freeing Volpetti he shut in his own face the doors of France and lost the opportunity of an interview with the sister whom he was so anxious to convince.

"Our fate is in God's hands, Amélie," he said with an imposing gesture, "Volpetti is under superhuman control."

"That superhuman control," observed Giacinto sarcastically, "sent a vessel to rescue him. That vessel at this moment carries him to France. Heart of the Madonna! we require genius now to escape with our lives. Am I not right, brothers?" and he turned solemnly toward the other Carbonari.

"Gentlemen," said Amélie, "a secret merits a secret. Of what force do you speak?"

"Mademoiselle," replied the Italian, "we are not permitted to reveal the key of our society. But this much may I say: We are the mines which, in

annihilating the present, shall become the basis of the future. Though having the appearance of pygmies, we are loosening the foundations of the columns which support giants. Our aim is to protect the weak."

René listened with knitted brow and uneasy expression.

Louis Pierre added:

"We are vital reaction manifesting itself through convulsions. We are creating by destroying. Our program is to undo the done."

"The program of Satan," murmured Naundorff involuntarily.

"No one can speak those words with so little reason as you, Monseigneur," replied the other. "Did you not say just now that justice is realized in violence? Did you not speak of expiation? and of the iniquities of the past?"

"Yes," answered Naundorff. "I am effacing the sins of a dynasty—its abuses, cruelties and indifference to human suffering."

"Father," said Amélie, "we are effacing also its frailties and apostasies. Therefore, we must not temporize nor vacillate in critical moments. O, can you not comprehend that justice would be on our side at this moment if we might deal the usurpation a deadly blow?"

"We are ready to serve your cause," said Giacinto. "Naundorff and his daughter may count upon our loyalty and we are those who walk by night through the bowels of the earth. The soles of our shoes are cork that our footsteps may not reach men's ears. Captain Soliviac," he concluded, suddenly turning toward the seaman, "you are commanding aboard this vessel. What route are we to take?"

Soliviac's green Celtic eyes flashed. So far he had taken no part in the discussion, but now resolution stamped itself upon his face and his voice vibrated with authority, that authority of supreme moments when the ship ran great danger.

"We are to take the route which the other ship has taken; we are to overtake her before she reaches France and capture her. She shall not touch French soil while Camille Soliviac is Captain of the Polipheme."

The others were silent, comprehending the danger. No war raged on the seas; corsairs and pirates were restrained severely.

"What other suggestion can you offer?" asked Soliviac.

"None," replied Giacinto and Louis Pierre.

"Such being the case—," and he turned to descend the stairway.

"Captain," interrupted Louis Pierre, "the schooner is lighter and swifter than our brig. She has an enormous advantage."

"No," replied Soliviac. "She is going at ordinary speed and is unconscious of our intention. Besides, she seems to be traveling backward while we have increased speed since the lulling of the storm. As soon as she is within reach of our cannon, we will salute and watch the effect. Therefore, let us drink each other good luck in another punch, after which Mademoiselle may retire to her state-room and pray for us."

"I to my state-room?" demanded Amélie, her eyes flashing. "How little you know me, Captain."

Naundorff clutched Soliviac by the sleeve, and, almost kneeling, entreated:

"Renounce force, for in that renunciation is the secret of life. It has been written: I took your cause in my hands and your grievance have I avenged. O forbear to spill blood, forbear to destroy life."

The Captain, respectfully but with evident displeasure, moved away, saying:

"There is no alternative."

"But what right have you, Captain, to attack that vessel for performing a charitable deed?"

"What right?" retorted the Breton. "Tell me first by what right the innocent boy-king was tortured, imprisoned, buried? When that schooner and its crew sleep on the floor of ocean, no man will arise to speak to me about rights. Ho there! to business." And he ran down the stairs, followed by René and the Carbonari. Amélie flung her arms around her father's neck as he fell on his knees in prayer. The pale blue morning light filtered through the cabin windows and gleamed over the water.

Chapter IX

THE SCHOONER

THE Polipheme with outstretched sails sped swiftly after the schooner. Soliviac turned the telescope upon her, remarking to the mate:

"She seems to be lying to."

The mate took the instrument and looked also.

"Not only lying to," he said, "but she is also drawing in sails."

"What can that mean?" mused the captain.

"It means good luck to us, for within another quarter of an hour she will be within our reach. Then we may send her a salute. There is no necessity of announcing our intentions to the high seas: therefore, lower the French flag and hoist the Dutch, in case there be witnesses to our fray."

These orders were silently executed. The crew never commented upon the captain's acts. Besides, having been habituated by their long campaigns against England to piracy and lust for booty, they chafed at the restrictions of a normally organized commerce and enthusiastically wel-

comed the approaching struggle. The schooner's graceful form, floating the English flag, was easily discernible. Her crew appeared like ants, moving to and fro.

"Captain," exclaimed the pilot, "do you not see them signal? They have just fired off a sky rocket."

"Let us give them a sample of *our* rockets!" answered Soliviac.

"Let us demand the spy," whispered Giacinto.

"Are you crazy?" asked Louis Pierre. "What if the fellow leave them a letter for the government? No. The vessel that has rescued Volpetti must perish. Are you trembling? Have you contracted the scruples of the man who is praying on his knees in the cabin? I also believe in divine justice· I believe that 'tis we who accomplish it."

"Captain," called out the mate, "do you see that thin column of smoke rising from her right side?"

Soliviac dropped the telescope, for his eyes served him better at that distance than the instrument. He saw that the vessel was burning.

"She is afire!" he called out.

"Fire!" shouted the three Carbonari.

"The divine justice of which Naundorff spoke," said René.

"Nevertheless, inasmuch as a few buckets of water may extinguish that justice, let us send a salute to the English flag, Captain," ironically remarked Louis Pierre.

Soliviac gave the order and four little cannon, with a simultaneous precision which revealed practice, sent their load into the schooner's side.

"Load again!" shouted Soliviac. "At the masts and spars!"

Aboard the schooner, the unexpected attack produced panic. The crew ran back and forth in consternation and the smoke grew denser.

"Louis Pierre!" called out Giacinto in ferocious joy, "I see Volpetti aboard."

The Polipheme's second discharge broke the mizzen mast, which, falling, caught beneath it two of the sailors. The smoke rose in great columns and 'twas impossible to see what further happened.

"Where are we?" asked Soliviac of the pilot.

"Opposite the isle of Jersey, but nearer the shore than they. Those who count on swimming ashore have slim chance."

"Keep an eye on the skiffs," called the captain. "Now they are trying to save themselves."

Red tongues of flame shot out amid the smoke. The captain commanded.

"Another salute! Let water in to quench their fire."

Again the cannons' load was poured into the schooner's side. She attempted no defence, for all her energy was directed to fighting the fire aboard. One of the Polipheme's balls went into her bow, and the water roared through the aperture.

"Now she goes to the bottom!" shouted Giacinto, wild with joy.

Just then the crew lowered a skiff. The tiny craft dropped to the water and floated like a shell, and several persons cast themselves therein. Two seized the oars and, to the astonishment of the spectators, started toward the Polipheme, whose sailors would gladly have fired upon them had not Louis Pierre interposed. The skiff came within hailing distance. Two men, a woman and a child of some five years were visible.

"Save us!" they entreated wildly. "We have not harmed you!"

Amélie shudderingly grasped the captain's arm.

"Have mercy on them!" she said.

"It cannot be," he answered.

"At least the child," she insisted.

"Hello there!" he called to a sailor. "Cast them a cable and hoist up the boy."

"And the others?"

A look and gesture from Soliviac answered the question. The skiff drew nearer and some moments later the child, almost dead with fright, was drawn up to the deck. Amélie gathered him in her arms and covered his face with kisses.

"Mamma! mamma!" wailed the little fellow in English.

Notwithstanding her natural courage, Amélie took refuge in a heap of cables and clasped the child tightly to her breast. She did not wish to see or hear, but the shrieks of the skiff's inmates sounded on her ears even tho she covered them close.

She clasped the child tightly. Suddenly she screamed aloud, for she felt the vessel beneath her tremble amid a deafening explosion. The child ceased sobbing through fright. The schooner's magazine had exploded, casting her into the air. The detonation was followed by a terrible silence while pieces of broken timber and mutilated bodies floated on the surface of the water.

Naundorff raised the almost inanimate form of his daughter from the deck, and then exclaimed

in broken tones that seemed to presage naught but a hopeless future:

"Blood has been spilled for our cause; God is against us!"

Book IV

PICMORT

Chapter I

THE CASTLE

AT the foot of a mountain-chain which crosses Brittany, continues through Normandy and terminates in Cherbourg, stands the castle of Picmort. It pertains to the de Brezé patrimony, through the Guyornarch fief, which was the avenue through which the illustrious family claimed descent from the royal house of Brittany. Notwithstanding political vicissitudes and the invasion of new ideas, the de Brezés continued to exercise a veritable sovereignty in that corner of France. There lived not in the valley a shepherd nor a long-haired peasant who failed to acknowledge the dominion of the House de Brezé and render the tribute of a reverence approaching divine honors. René during his hunting journeys to Picmort received proofs of the extraordinary attachment which the Bretons evinced to their master.

One evening as the setting sun gilded the lichens on the rough Celtic rocks, there traveled toward the

thicket a woman and a man,—the latter carrying a child in his arms. They journeyed laboriously, as tho greatly fatigued, especially the woman, who with the greatest difficulty lifted her small feet, clad in rude sabots, which were in keeping with her peasant's dress and the white coif covering her blond hair. At last, heaving a sigh, she sank upon the ground. The man came to her saying warningly and gently:

"Mademoiselle, it will soon be night and if we do not hurry, we shall have to sleep here with the child. Can you not make an effort?"

"The sabots have bruised my feet," she complained, her beautiful young face full of pain. "But no matter, I shall start again."

She tried to walk, but failed, saying:

"O I cannot, I cannot! What will become of us?"

Louis Pierre did not dare to insist further. He placed the sleeping child on the ground and wiped his wet forehead with a nervous hand. Suddenly, the barking of a dog came to them, followed by the appearance of a great mastiff, springing through the thicket. The child awoke and began to cry, and the woman,—girl, rather—half rose. Then the approaching tread of a horse was heard and a splendid voice called to the dog:

"Here Silvano!" and the horseman sprang lightly to earth. Turning to the travelers, he said:

"A good and holy evening to you."

He was a tall, young, finely proportioned peasant of beautiful beardless face and abundant hair.

"Are you the people we await at Picmort?"

"We are," answered Louis Pierre. "Are you Jean Vilon?"

"My name is Jean Vilon, servant of God and my master, the Marquis de Brezé. My letter of instruction reads that there will arrive a woman, a child and two men."

"Our companion remained on the coast," replied Louis Pierre evasively. "He will be here later."

"He shall be welcome when he arrives," replied Jean Vilon with grave courtesy. "In the meantime I shall carry out my master's orders. He wishes that no one in the village know of your presence. Prepare then to follow my instructions."

"We shall obey you, Jean Vilon. I know you are a valued and trusted servant of the Marquis."

The Breton made no rejoinder to the praise. He stooped and raised the tired girl to the saddle, caressed the child and seated him on his shoulder. Then, taking the reins in his hands, he led the

horse into the thicket. Night was almost upon them and the darkness was rapidly increasing. The horse, had he not been preceded by Silvano and led by Vilon, would have many times stumbled upon the stumps of trees hidden beneath the grass and leaves. The child clung confidingly to Vilon, asking incessantly, "Are we almost there?" After a three hours' journey, they halted in an open which led to a species of natural bower. Here Vilon aided Amélie to descend. He placed the child on the earth, tied the horse to a tree and took from his pocket a small lantern which he lighted from a flint. Then turning its beams full upon Louis Pierre's face, he asked in the cautious tone of a peasant-warrior:

"The watch-word?"

"Giac and Saint Ann," Amélie hastened to answer.

"Correct," answered the young Breton. "Henceforth we are friends. My master has written a letter of instructions, which he commands me to burn after reading. Bear witness that I comply," and he took from his belt a folded paper which he lighted with a flint. When it had crumbled to ashes, he followed the mastiff for some distance. On reaching a great stone, he halted, the removal of which disclosed an aperture which

resembled the opening of a wild beast's cave. He signaled the others to follow, entering first himself, bearing the child in his arms. The little fellow commenced to cry, whereupon Amélie drew near, whispering:

"Baby Dick, do you want to live with me or away from me?"

"With you, with you!" he cried.

"Well then," and she smiled sweetly into Jean Vilon's face, "go with this good man, and he will take you where you will always be with me."

The peasant stared at her transported. Amélie took off her sabots and followed him into the tunnel, Louis Pierre accompanying them. At first they had almost to crawl, for the passage was so narrow, but soon they were able to walk upright. After a while they reached a circular apartment whose roof was sustained by granite pillars and whose floor was strewn with dry herbs. Here Jean Vilon presented his charges with a basket of provisions there awaiting them. Bread, wine, cheese and milk constituted the refreshment, and their hunger made these seem delicious. Their guide was silent during the meal, tho his eyes of changeful hue were fixed from time to time on Amélie, in wonder and admiration. The white

Breton coif on her head intensified the girl's great beauty.

When the frugal repast was over, Jean Vilon cast the lantern's light upon the wall; a rusty grating appeared, which he unfastened with a rusty key. Back of the grating they beheld another passage-way, narrower still, high, inclined upward, and winding to the right, after ascending which they passed through several galleries, reaching at last an oaken door barred with iron. Jean applied a key to this, and it swung upon its hinges. They entered an octagonal salon, through which they passed on to another apartment wherein began a stairway which seemed interminable. Amélie, notwithstanding her exhaustion, resolutely moved on; but there came a moment when she tottered, for the lack of fresh air almost asphyxiated her. Jean hastened to support her and with the gentlest reverence, completed the ascent, his arm around her shoulders.

At the landing a current of fresh air revived her. They stood on the floor of an empty cistern. Stars shone overhead. Amélie realized that the arrangement was a military precaution for enabling the besieged to escape. Jean explained that there existed a tunnel from the cistern to a mine. They walked for a while along a subterranean passage.

Suddenly Jean seemed to pass through the wall. He had but leaned heavily against it and thus disclosed a lane, so narrow that they had to push themselves sidewise through it. At length they stood in a large yard, near the foot of several tall gray towers overgrown with ivy. Amélie and Louis Pierre looked back for a last sight of the passage-way which had conducted them thither. It had disappeared. No exit was visible and Jean smiled demurely at their amazement.

Then he placed a finger on his lips and, bidding Louis Pierre go ahead with the lantern, he approached one of the towers and pushed against the postern, which yielded. Then, with the air of a host, he preceded them up a winding stairway, across an antechamber and into a sumptuously furnished salon, brilliantly lighted with wax tapers in porcelain candelabra of crystal pendants. The apartment was an example of highly refined Louis Quinze taste; the caprice of a Marquise de Brezé, removed by a wildly jealous husband from court and incarcerated in the gloomy towers of Picmort. This most capricious Marquise had adorned her prison walls with the refinements and exquisite fantasies of Versailles, until death came at last to her amid flowers, satins and laces. The boudoir remained ever after untenanted,

with its mythological paintings, gilded screens, voluptuous couches, blue celadon jars, silver, ivory and enameled ornaments. Even the Marquise's lace handkerchief remained where the dying lady's feverish hand had crushed it.

"My master has written that this apartment is to be occupied by you, Mademoiselle," said Jean. "It is called the Boudoir of the Marquise and the windows are always closed. There is a belief among the peasants to the effect that death should visit the castle if the windows be opened. You had best, therefore, in order to avoid comment, remain during the daytime in the rooms above. If you are seen from below, 'twill be thought that you are a servant-maid or my sister from Saint Brieuc."

"You are a prudent man, Jean Vilon," said Louis Pierre.

"A prudent and faithful man," said Amélie, smiling sweetly upon the Breton, as with the gentle dignity that so well became her, she seated herself in an armchair.

"And now, Jean," she said, "provide my fellow-traveler with a bed and room. I see my own here. Have a little mattress brought for the boy, as he does not wish to leave me," and she caressed Baby Dick's blond head as she

added an assurance that she would be very comfortable.

As the two men retired, the light of dawn silvered the stern turrets of Picmort.

Chapter II

BAD NEWS

ON the following day, Amélie and Louis Pierre had a serious talk.

"I do not consider," remarked the girl, that René has reason to complain of my compliance with his instructions. I have obeyed him blindly, and that is not so easy a thing for me to do. But now I demand to know why, instead of accompanying my father to Paris and of hearing our faithful adherents acclaim him King, I am banished as tho I were a prisoner and enjoined to remain in a peasant's dress behind closed windows. In order to breathe fresh air, I must ascend the dizzy heights of a tower."

Louis Pierre did not at once reply. He sat for a few moments in that gloomy attitude which he so often assumed.

"Mademoiselle," he said after a few moments, "courage!"

"Speak the truth," demanded Amélie imperiously. "I am no weakling."

And her face was so gloriously brave that the Knight of Liberty spoke with more than his accustomed frankness.

"Your father did not go immediately to Paris, for we are watched and caution is necessary. Our original plan has been abandoned, namely, that your father intercede with his sister and the Marquis reunite the families attached to the cause. Were that program in progress, your presence in Paris would be of inestimable value. The father and daughter together would present a picture calculated to quiet all lingering doubt. The impression you both produced upon Giacinto and me in the Red Fish would be repeated upon all beholders. But as matters stand to-day, your very faces would be your condemnation."

Amélie fixed her brave eyes on the knight's dark face.

"You mean," she said, "that Volpetti has been saved."

"He has, that is to say some of the sailors reached the shore. How they survived fire, explosion, cannon, bullets and shipwreck I cannot say—"

Amélie buried her face in her hands, but the springs of her wonderful iron will soon recovered their tension.

"And how has this been discovered?" she asked. "I mean that some have been saved?"

"You know that on reaching French soil, we arranged to travel separately and by circuitous routes until we should reach some neighboring port, from which each on a different day should take the diligence. At Dinan, we spent our first night."

"Yes," said Amélie.

"At Dinan, Giacinto visited inns and taverns, conversed with sailors and fishermen and from them learned the story he too well knew, the tragedy in which he had played so prominent a part. He was told that two or three sailors had floated ashore at Pleneuf, been given shelter by fishermen and were now recovering."

"If that be all," said the girl, with a look of relief, "why conjecture the worst? Volpetti was not in the best condition for swimming."

"God grant your wish."

"When René left me after our landing, he assured me that an inviolable asylum awaited me here and a faithful guardian in Jean Vilon. 'From father to son have the Vilons served the de Brezés,' he said. The present steward's father was executed for his adhesion to the throne and altar. The castle contains places of concealment known only

to Jean and myself. If the attempt were made to seize you, 'twould be impossible while breath remains in Jean's body. He thinks that you are an unhappy girl, distantly related to me whom I have rescued from enforced entry into a convent."

"Louis Pierre, I know that you and Giacinto stand for ideas widely at variance with those of which my father is a symbol; nevertheless, my faith in you is absolute. You are now my guardian angel," and she extended her hand to him.

He did not dare touch, much less to kiss it. His face was transfigured, beautified, as he solemnly said:

"The daughter of France may trust the sons of the Revolution. She may place faith in the enemy of the institutions which the Bourbon symbolizes. No man more than I hates the dynasty which, in committing treason against the country, became the cause of that country's woes, the woes of a foreign invasion. Mortal, eternal, inextinguishable hatred has Louis Pierre sworn against the House. This hate has guided his feet and been the spring of his actions until a few days since. Now I give the Bourbons a chance to prove that they have profited by adversity, that they are capable of being animated by an impulse of justice, that they repent them of their iniquities. I give the usurper a

chance to voluntarily abdicate the throne and acknowledge the union of royalty with the strong, pure blood of the people. If this miracle be performed, if the sister open her arms to the brother, Louis Pierre will retract his malediction and forgive the House of Bourbon."

These extravagant words caused Amélie's expression to become graver and loftier.

"Who doubts, Louis Pierre," she said in almost affectionate effusion, as from a queen to a subject, "that my father will accomplish his mission? The recital of his unparalleled suffering, his atrocious martyrdom, the refuge he sought and obtained among the people, his children born of a daughter of those people; all this will speak for him eloquently. Humanity has suffered too greatly to remain unmoved before such woes. To my father is reserved the sublime office of reconciling the people and royalty."

Her eyes and cheeks glowed and the Carbonaro ejaculated:

"Blessed be the day when that light shines in France."

"It will shine!" she cried. "Victory is almost ours. My father is secure beneath René's protection. He possesses proofs which, were it necessary to appeal to a tribunal, would win the cause in-

stantly. O even tho Volpetti be risen from hell, what harm could he do?"

"What could he do?" repeated the Carbonaro. "He can do everything to accomplish our ruin. Do not deceive yourself, Mademoiselle. If that man lives, we are lost. He holds the strings of our enterprise, he knows the entire history of the mechanic Naundorff. 'Tis he enveloped him in that name as in a winding sheet. If Volpetti be living, woe to your father, woe to you, woe to us all and to Soliviac, who has been of so great service. 'Tis a question of life and death, and we are not sleeping upon the danger, Mademoiselle," he concluded sombrely.

"What do you mean?" she demanded almost sternly.

"I mean that Giacinto is with Soliviac, and that they are exploring every shoal, creek and cape, interviewing every fisherman. Their destination is Pleneuf. Their project may have a startling effect," and Louis Pierre's voice rang out almost stridently.

Chapter III

GIACINTO'S RETURN

AMÉLIE was forced to resign herself patiently to await the news. Life tends to normalize itself, whatever the given conditions, and she wisely accommodated herself to the inevitable. During the mornings she roamed over the great castle, in company with Vilon and Baby Dick. They would ascend towers and descend into subterranean passages, rearranging the salons and adorning the altars. The only inmates of the lofty feudal edifice, besides Vilon, Amélie, Louis Pierre and the child were two maid-servants, one of whom was in charge of the kitchen. At dawn both maids went into the fields for fruit and vegetables or to take the cows to pasture, so that Amélie, free from importunate eyes, walked about freely. They were curious to see the Marquis's relative, she who slept in the Marquise's boudoir, but they made no impertinent inquiries through fear of Jean Vilon, who alone waited upon the guest. During the afternoon, Louis Pierre would

come up from his room and play dominoes or discuss the future with her. The Carbonaro had read many books. His brain had received certain ideas as though they had been graven thereon with a corrosive. He was visionary, mystical and a dreamer, and pertained to the sect known as Theophilanthropists; he believed himself destined by Providence to accomplish some high mission requiring great valor and abnegation. His chief characteristic was a contempt for life, and this secured him Amélie's esteem.

With Jean Vilon, Amélie conversed less than with Louis Pierre and her treatment always displayed an air of affectionate patronage. She was a woman, very much of a woman, and fully conscious of her effect upon men. She used no coquetry toward the fine peasant for in no particular did her feminine artifices approach familiarity. The homage she loved to receive was that of the soul, the adoration of chivalry; she longed for the devotion which illustrious unhappy queens had inspired, such as Mary Stuart, or Marie Antoinette. The attachment of Jean Vilon, each day more apparent, was such as a youth of medieval ages paid the holy relics. He divined and filled her every wish. On warm nights he escorted her through the woods that she might breathe the

fresh, pure air. They took long walks which brought the roses back to her cheeks and the litheness to her limbs. These clandestine rambles, which seemed at first so risky, soon became a custom.

But her chief delight was the child, the unfortunate waif, torn from the arms of his drowning mother and cast into hers. When asked his name, he would answer "Baby, baby!"

"Only Baby?" Amélie would ask.

One day the little fellow fixed his blue eyes, full of candor, on her face, and added:

"Baby Dick."

"His name is Richard, then," said Amélie. "This is some information gained," and with that much she had to content herself. The child had either forgotten or did not know his family name. Of his father he remembered nothing; of his mother he knew that she lived in a cottage near the beach, amid many flowers and with a large dog, as large as Silvano. Amélie began to think that he was a child born out of wedlock and she felt for him a greater attachment than ever. From the first moment of being with her, he had called her "Mamma." Her eyes would fill with tears as she placed him at night in his little bed and clasped his tiny hands in prayer. "He has no

mother but me," she would say with trembling lips.

One afternoon Louis Pierre read aloud to her from Rousseau's Emile while she held Baby Dick on her knees. Suddenly Jean Vilon appeared.

"A man has just arrived," he said "bringing my master's watch-word. He came by the road of Saint Brieuc. Shall I open to him?"

Louis exchanged a lightning glance with Amélie.

"Is he dark, handsome, with curly black hair and in sailor's clothes?" she asked.

"Yes, and he seems very tired."

"Bring him through the subterranean passage, no matter how great is his fatigue. The servants must not see a stranger enter."

Jean Vilon withdrew, and it was night when, almost fainting with exhaustion, and covered with dust, Giacinto appeared before them. Amélie ordered Vilon to retire. There was no need to ask questions. The Italian's face, with terrible eloquence, revealed the truth. Nevertheless Louis Pierre inquired:

"Bad news?"

"The worst."

"Volpetti is saved?"

"Saved and on the road to Paris."

Louis Pierre's voice uttered an inarticulate growl, but the girl recovered sufficient courage to say:

"Come, take heart! How did he save himself?"

"He and three others swam ashore. The waves dashed them against the rocks, wounding and bruising them seriously. One of the men died from the effects; two others are lying on their backs in a fisherman's hut, and the only other of the party—was ever misfortune equal to this?—the only other,—he whose bruises amounted only to pinches and who speedily recovered sufficient strength to write a number of letters,—each of which is a dagger thrust in our sides—is that—cursed dog,—that—fiend—Volpetti!"

Giacinto clutched his fine black hair and tore a handful from his head.

"Fate is against us," said Louis Pierre gloomily. "And Soliviac?"

"Aboard the Polipheme, on the sea, coasting toward Cherbourg. He would gladly sail away to Hamburg, out of danger's way, were he not a knight. He stays because we may have need of him."

"So you have accomplished nothing?"

"Nothing. After Volpetti communicated with the prefect, a guard of soldiers surrounded the hut

in which he was recovering. 'Tis a wonder that I was not captured for I have been chased like a wild beast. A bullet pierced my cap and I have reached you by miracle."

Louis Pierre interrupted:

"You and I must leave for Paris at once. If one of us be killed, the other may reach the city and warn Naundorff. We shall take separate routes."

"Very well, but we need horses and money."

"Mademoiselle," said Louis Pierre, "you will be safe, here. Danger cannot reach you with Vilon as a guard. Otherwise, I should not leave you. You know the secret passages and are safe from all the spies and European cabinets in existence. As for us, we are burning our last cartridge in going to Paris. Volpetti has unlimited resources: gendarmerie, regular troops, magistrates, spies and those fellows who go by the name of 'Partisans of the Order.' What a tremendous mistake it was to let Volpetti go. If we today considered our own safety, we should immediately board the Polipheme and depart forever from the coasts of France."

Amélie rose and stretched a hand to each Carbonaro:

"Defenders of a cause you espoused through generosity, friends, brothers, you shall live always

in my heart. If my father's act in freeing Volpetti bring evil to you, O forgive him! I implore you on my knees." And the beautiful girl was sinking to the floor, when the Knights interposed and raised her. They pressed their lips upon her white hands, as though she were a queen. They left without a word, for their voices were full of tears. From a window, she watched them leave and her brave spirit sank within her.

After their departure, she seemed to fall into a lethargy. She missed the long colloquies with Louis Pierre. Alone in the sumptuous apartments whose dust-covered portraits of ladies and paladins seemed to look upon her with cold disdain, she suffered the inevitable effect of isolation. No letters reached her, for René trusted nothing to the mails. She tortured herself with surmises; she seemed to see her father in the hands of the police or in a dungeon; René the victim of some political snare, and the Carbonari prisoners on an indictment of piracy. And she told herself over and over that her father's absurd magnanimity had caused all the trouble.

Her only consolation was the companionship of Baby Dick, and the little fellow was never separated from her. Hours and hours they would sit together at the window which looked over the deep entrenchments, Amélie sewing, but with frequent

interruptions, for she could not refrain from stroking Baby's soft curls or taking him on her knees. He, meanwhile, asked questions incessantly and, when she failed to reply promptly, covered her face with kisses. Silvano would lay his splendid head in her lap and look into her face with his great intelligent eyes.

Chapter IV

NIGHT

IN the midst of her anxiety, a new trouble broke upon her,—the transformation taking place in her guardian, Jean. Not that the Breton permitted himself liberties; the deference he paid her was daily more marked and his attitude—that of devoté before an image—was more intensified; but the devoté had eyes and the eyes would light up on beholding his mistress; he had hands and those hands would tremble in placing food on the table. She felt that he loved her with a wild, deep love which only his iron will controlled.

She instinctively accentuated the difference in their ranks; she no longer walked with him through the woods. Her fear of him increased daily until she entered none of the castle's apartments, remaining constantly in the boudoir or in Baby's little chamber which adjoined her own.

"This misfortune," she soliloquized, for as such she designated Vilon's passion, "has its cause in

my disguise. Had I appeared to him in my proper character he would never have dared. My God, help me! At the mercy of a man whose eyes dart lightning, and from whom I must conceal my fears, I have need of all my self-possession. If I falter, this splendid animal will grip me."

One night she lay awake listening to Vilon's furtive footfalls in the antechamber where, in his impassioned fidelity, he kept guard. Such vigilance, far from tranquilizing the girl, filled her with ever increasing terror. She tossed upon the gilded Pompadour bed, whose woodwork was carved in capricious and elegant mythological designs. The Marquise's pale shade seemed to be near. The child's tranquil breathing came to her from his little low bed, back of the embroidered Chinese screen. A tiny lamp, whose light was softened by a green glass globe, projected unsteady rays, which magnified shadows and increased her terror. She was fast becoming a victim to insomnia. Her lids closed but the light shining through them wrought figures of fantastic dragons and pale oblique-eyed damsels and mandarins with drooping mustaches who first became animated and then disappeared. When these grotesque visions vanished, there glowed on the silken back-ground goddesses and nymphs of Watteau pattern, who, descending

from amid the bed carvings, danced gayly on with clattering satin shoes and gleaming bosoms. Their laughs rang shrill as they too vanished and there arose from the depths of the tangled forest the tanned countenance and blond hair of Jean Vilon. He seized one of the nymphs around the waist; the nymph was herself; she struggled vainly; he clasped his rude hands around her delicate neck and compressed it with gradually increasing force, almost extinguishing life. In order to assure herself that all was delusion she opened wide her eyes just as the brass enameled clock pealed forth midnight.

In an effort to sleep, she turned on her side and drew the pillow over her face, but she continued to hear inexplicable noises. People seemed to be walking through the castle. Suddenly a wild hope filled her. Perhaps her father, having triumphed, had summoned her to join him. Perhaps René was the bearer of the good tidings. She raised herself on her elbow. No longer was there any question. Footsteps sounded through the vestibules, the antechambers, the salons; light gleamed under the door. Suddenly the lock was noisily forced and a lady in traveling costume, followed by two servants wearing the de Brezé livery, walked swiftly toward the bed.

Amélie became speechless with amazement. Seated upright, she stared at the lady with wide eyes, who, in turn, fastened on the girl a hostile, terrible look. The two recognized each other. Amélie beheld again the arrogant faded beauty of the face so wonderfully like René's in feature and so different in expression. And the lady gazed again awestruck upon the fac simile of the countenance which in miniatures, pastels, oil-paintings, engravings, lithographs, snuff boxes, etc., was the object of compassionate adoration. The resemblance was at that moment so striking that the Duchess de Rousillon remained motionless, dominated by an involuntary reverence. Quickly recovering her sang froid, she said:

"Leave the bed!"

"Why are you here?" demanded Amélie. "Why have you forced an entrance into my room at such an hour?"

The girl's indignation momentarily disconcerted the lady, but very soon she laughed disdainfully:

"I might ask with what shadow of a right you have taken up quarters in my castle?"

"This castle, madam, appertains to René de Giac, Marquis de Brezé."

"I am his mother. I come in his name and

with full authority from him. Rise at once if you have a sense of decency that we may talk in a suitable manner."

"René has given you no authority," protested the girl.

"My authority will soon be manifest," replied the Duchess.

"Jean Vilon! Jean Vilon!" calledAmélie.

"Jean Vilon will not come. He is my slave. Do not become hysterical. And rise, I repeat. 'Twill be a pleasanter method than having my servants pull you out of bed."

"In order that I should rise, madam, these servants must retire. I am not accustomed to dressing in the presence of men."

The Duchess was constrained into making a signal. The liveried attendants placed the wax tapers on the mantel and left the apartment and Amélie deftly and modestly made a hasty toilet. Then she turned to the Duchess, saying:

"Will you now be good enough to explain your conduct?"

The Duchess advanced upon her in fury.

"I dare say," she hissed, "that you can guess I have come to break the cords by which you hold my son,—you and that imposter, your father. The scales have at last dropped from René's eyes;

he is disillusioned and repentant. He revealed to me your hiding place. In his name I come."

"You lie, madam. May my soul be banished forever from God if René knows you are here. Did he know it, he would stand before me now and shield me from you."

"Impertinent, intriguing adventuress! I tear away your mask. Believe what you choose regarding my son, but prepare to obey my orders."

"And I remind you that I am your son's betrothed wife."

"That pretence is the most amusing proof of your ingenuity. The wife of my son! So great an honor, Mademoiselle Naundorff, would overwhelm our family. The de Brezé contract an alliance with the daughter of the convict Prussian watch-maker!—Let us talk rationally; you are the sweetheart of a good man who loves you devotedly. My steward, Jean Vilon, is ready to marry you at this moment."

"What!" shrieked Amélie. "What do you say of Jean Vilon?"

"That he is to be your excellent husband. The dear fellow is wild with joy in knowing that I have brought the chaplain in my chaise to bless the couple. You have made him lose his head about you. Ah, do not play the innocent. You have

understood each other very well for some time. I shall stand sponsor and bestow a dot upon you. As for Jean? I shall give him the Plouret farm. In short you shall be consoled for not being the Marquise de Brezé. The wife of an honest man is a more suitable position for your station—"

"Is this a nightmare?" cried Amélie. Then with supreme disdain, she added, "Not even René, himself, could obtain from me what you propose. My life is in your hands, the life of the woman whom your son loves. But my will you cannot conquer. Drag me to the altar I will say no with my last breath."

The Duchess seemed taken aback at the emphasis with which the refusal was spoken. She revealed her true character, that of a pompous impertinent woman, performing awkwardly an assigned rôle. With an angry gesture, she passed into the adjoining apartment, and held for ten minutes or more a whispered conference with others. She returned accompanied by her two attendants, one of whom looked at Amélie in a peculiar manner. Both approached the bed whereon Baby was lying and lifted him up. The frightened child commenced to cry and Amélie ran to him, but they snatched him from her arms and disappeared.

"If you love the child so greatly," observed the Duchess, "you may have the happiness of his company by consenting to marry Jean Vilon. He is pretty badly spoilt, owing to the manner in which you have brought him up. Jean is willing to adopt him. Is he really your own? Well, we shall soon be able to judge of that."

The Duchess retired and the doors were barred and bolted after her. Amélie realized that she was indeed a prisoner.

Chapter V

THE CHILD

IMPRISONMENT could not subdue her. She would have died rather than yield. Her father's fate, her lover's fate and the fate of dear little Dick, weighed each moment more heavily on her heart. The Duchess's visit to Picmort signified much; it indica ed that the police had discovered their plans.

"If my father," she thought during the long sleepless hours, "had been received by his sister, if his rights had been recognized, the Duchess would not have dared to outrage me with this proposition. Can René be imprisoned? He must be living, or his mother would not seek to marry me to Jean Vilon. In this plot, I see the hand of Volpetti. I wonder if the spy was not one of the servants. I think I recognized him. O they would be rid of me, and, not daring to kill me, they think to marry me basely. For so could the Duchess free her son and they have one more pretext for disclaiming my father's pretensions

—But Baby Dick? What is to become of him?"

Terror stricken she walked the floor. She began to comprehend how great was the love which bound her to the frail being to whom she had been playing the rôle of mother. She reproached herself cruelly for having contributed to orphan the little fellow. His beauty, his grief at being separated from her, his caresses, his cunning little ways, all these surged to her mind and seemed to obliterate her other griefs.

"What does this mean? I know not my father's whereabouts; René is likely in grave danger; but my thoughts are absorbed with this child who is joined to me by no tie, whom chance placed in my arms and violence removed."

Morning dawned and she had not closed her eyes. The birth of day brought calmness as it does to all human souls. She had no longer need of concealment, so, running to the windows, she flung them wide open, heedless of the warning that death would ensue, which Vilon had given her when she arrived in the Castle. The light streamed into the Marquise's boudoir. The capricious antiquated draperies became illuminated like a stage setting, contrasting with the desolate magnificence of the exterior and the sombre massiveness of the towers which the sun began to brighten.

Amélie looked out thro those windows for the first time.

"What will they do to Baby?" she asked herself. "What can they do? Nothing more than separate him from me, I suppose. But he has become so dear to me—Still that shall not break my will. *I* the wife of Jean Vilon?—What is the meaning of this? How has he dared lend himself to the scheme? Why has he let the Duchess in? O his passion explains it all. How repellent!—Better death a thousand times."

She gazed vacantly upon the faded silken hangings, the sumptuous furniture and elegant old laces; she caught her image in the mirrors of magnificent frames wherein the Marquise had so often beheld her pallid wasted features. Suddenly, she started, listening affrightedly to Baby Dick's cry in the next room.

"Mamma 'Mélie!' Mamma 'Mélie!" he called. "Come! Give me breakfast. It is very late."

With passion of which she had not deemed herself capable, she ran to the door and shook it violently, crying:

"My little heart, I can't come to you. Wait. Be very patient."

"My pretty mamma, I am alone. That bad lady shut me in. O break the door, mamma."

"I can't Baby," she answered, pushing with all her strength against the panels. And giving way to her grief, she dropped into a chair and sobbed. For the first time, despair seized her. Woman's tenderest attribute—the maternal instinct—vanquished her strong heart, even tho her attachment was for another woman's child. Perhaps, on that very account, 'twas more highly idealized.

Baby Dick continued to call to her in his sweet, pleading tones and she hid her face in the satin cushions, in a longing to drown his voice. But though she heard his wails more faintly, they seemed on that account more plaintive. She jumped into bed, drew the clothes over her head and sobbed in time to his moaning.

"O if I might break down that door and clasp his little body in my arms, I should fling away every ambitious project, even happiness with René. My love and pity outweigh every other consideration."

At eight o'clock breakfast was brought her by the two men who had come with the Duchess during the night. She asked several questions, to which no answer whatever was given. The morning seemed interminable. At noon the same attendants brought a lunch which, like the others, passed in silence. Amélie could not eat more

than a morsel of bread, for the child's cries were incessant. She refrained from talking to him, for doing so seemed to increase his suffering; but at length she could contain herself no longer, and tapping on the panels, she called affectionately:

"Baby! Baby! This is your Mamma 'Mélie."

"I am hungry, mamma!" he cried.

"Hungry, darling?" she exclaimed, a frightful suspicion crossing her mind. "Have they given you nothing to eat? Have you had no broth? Even tho you are not in my arms, eat everything they give you, Baby; I am close by. It is just as though I were with you."

"But Mamma 'Mélie, they give me nothing, no broth, no milk. O give me something, mamma!

A chill of horror ran through her veins. O were they capable of such cruelty? It must be that they had forgotten to take food to little Dick. Who would deliberately starve a child? But to think that he had been a whole day unfed! She wrung her hands and threw herself against the walls. With difficulty she repressed herself from screaming aloud. She shook the door with all her strength, though she well knew that that strength was impotent. Her temples seemed bursting. She felt on the verge of dementia. She recalled her father's imprisonment and the

numerous historical crimes related. But O to starve a child! This too was possible. Depravity is boundless when it possesses a human heart.

When evening at last came and the same speechless attendant brought her supper, she darted a withering look at him, saying:

"Order food taken to the child at once! If you are not tigers, have pity on him. Starve me if you will. What has he to do with this miserable plot?"

The man made no answer, whatever. He fixed his eyes upon her and she knew that he was Volpetti indeed.

The night was terrible. During the first part Baby sobbed incessantly, tho his voice grew fainter and fainter. At last it died out altogether. She grew frantic and running to the windows, called aloud:

"Jean Vilon! Jean Vilon! Wretch! Is it thus you obey your master?"

Then, as silence followed:

"René! René!"

Then:

"Silvano! Silvano!"

But no answer came. Picmort, the grim giant, was silent. Again she ran to the door separating her from Dick. He was speaking to her but in a

voice so faint that it was scarcely more than a murmur.

"He will die! he will die!" she wailed. "No child can resist such treatment. God have mercy on us both. What have I done to bring such suffering on this baby?—But I might save him; yes, if I renounce René forever. No, no! Rather perish the entire world. These fiends would defeat me through my sense of pity. Well, they shall not. I shall be stone. What is this child to me? Have I not once saved his life?—Perhaps my father was right. We have spilt blood—O no, no! My father you were weak and that weakness is my undoing—And now my pity for this child is making me also a weakling."

She broke into bitter weeping. Dick was calling:

"Mamma! Mamma!"

She crept to the door and whispered:

"My heaven, be patient. Very soon you shall have food and be with me."

With an air of a somnambulist did Amélie comb out her long blond hair and arrange it in its accustomed style. Then she performed her entire toilet, laughing stridently from time to time. Sometimes tears would trickle fast down her beautiful face, so pale and worn with its great anxiety.

When at noon the silent attendant brought the meal, she said to him:

"Tell the Duchess de Rousillon that I shall comply with her wishes, provided she has the door opened immediately which separates me from the child."

Chapter VI

THE MARRIAGE

AN hour later, Baby sat in Amélie's lap. She had given him milk and soup and he was covering her face with kisses,—this child whom she loved more than ever since renouncing for him what was dearer to her than life. Suddenly the doors were thrown wide open and the Duchess entered accompanied by the two liveried attendants, bearing handsome clothes, jewels and laces. Amèlie did not raise her eyes. Two girls, the maid-servants who had been so curious to see her, approached eagerly and began to deck the bride. They fastened a velvet petticoat beneath an embroidered silk jacket and pinned the veil and flowers in her beautiful hair. Soon she was transformed into a lovely Breton bride. Then the Duchess summoned Jean Vilon, who, in gala costume, a spray of wild flowers on his breast tied with many colored ribbons, made a brilliant handsome picture. He was pale, ecstatic, scarcely sensible of what was in preparation. Things had

happened in so bewildering a manner that he could not co-ordinate his thoughts; he remembered that the Duchess had unexpectedly arrived and imposed her authority as René's mother to force entrance into the castle; then she had ordered him in her son's name to prepare to marry the girl above, who was under the family's special protection, adding that her misfortunes were the consequence of being abandoned by a man who had betrayed her. Jean, tho wild with joy, hesitated and the Duchess added that Amélie came from his class and was unconnected with the de Brezé family.

"Be a good husband to her, Jean, and you will lack nothing. Be a good father to the child, and I will give you the Plouret farm."

O what did the farm matter to him! He trembled in a rapture of love. The husband of Amélie! He enveloped her now in a glance that was a wave of flame and then, intimidated by the prize he longed to grasp, he turned interrogating eyes upon the Duchess.

At length they went into the chapel. Two tenants of the de Brezés served as witnesses. The altar was adorned with gorgeous pots, holding paper flowers, and the chaplain stood ready to perform the ceremony. The two serving-maids

pressed near the bride, according to the custom of Breton girls, in eagerness to touch her so as to hasten their own marriage. Amélie seemed more a statue than an animate body. She recalled René's words: "In Picmort are the tombs of my ancestors, the ashes of my fathers; in Picmort I was baptized; in Picmort we shall receive heaven's blessing on our union." Since living in the castle she had often pictured their marriage in that chapel. She gazed on the long row of sepulchral arches to right and left and on the tombs with slabs supporting the prone forms of Crusader-paladins, hands crossed on breast; on the superb crucifix surmounting the altar; on the colored oblong windows. This was the chapel in which she was to have been united to René de Giac, but there stood now at her side a peasant, a rustic, a servant of the House of Brezé.

"But I must keep my word," she told herself. "I have promised this for the child's life."

When she realized that no miracle was forthcoming to liberate her, she was near screaming:

"Help! help! Violence is being enacted. I do not wish to marry."

But she knew that such appeal would be futile. She would be called hysterical and the child's martyrdom recommenced. Her story was so

extraordinary, her claims so pretentious, that the witnesses would think she raved. Raising her eyes to the face of the crucified, she seemed to hear these words:

"Suffer now, for the hour of your expiation has arrived."

The chaplain put the questions to which the groom replied in a passionate tremor; Amélie's well-nigh inarticulate assent made her the wife of Jean Vilon. Almost swooning, she left the chapel. As the bridal pair reached the salon, the Duchess approached with an affectionate greeting and holding a diamond brooch which she sought to place in the girl's bosom. Amélie drew back, as from the sting of a venomous reptile, refusing the Judas kiss which the lady would have sounded upon her cheek. But the Duchess continued to smile in insolent triumph. At last did an insuperable obstacle exist between her son and this impertinent girl. This union to a peasant made the pretentions of Naundorff seem more extravagant than ever. The liveried attendants smiled also in joy at the diabolical victory. Then the Duchess addressed this speech to the groom:

"Jean, you are a faithful servant and it has made me happy to divine your wishes and give you the wife you desired. She is suitable to you,

being of your class. Her father is a watch-maker and her mother a seamstress. May God give you long life. The castle of Picmort remains in your custody, it being the property of my son, the powerful Marquis de Brezé, whom I on this occasion represent. The farm of Plouret is yours and thither may you retire when you are minded to do so."

Amélie heard the words and thought she must be dreaming; such duplicity bewildered her. Indignant protests rose to her lips but her helplessness and disdain smothered the words. Casting upon the Duchess a look of regal scorn, she left the salon and re-entered the Marquise's boudoir.

Very soon after, the Duchess with her two liveried attendants and the chaplain was driven away from the castle. Jean Vilon carried the lady's belongings to the chaise and bowed in profound respect and gratitude as she departed. Amélie, having locked herself in, wept bitterly, the child clasped to her breast. Was all this true, great God? Was she indeed the wife of Jean Vilon? Absurd! Heaven would yet guide her out of this dilemma. O rather than submit, she would fling herself from that window into the pit below.

Baby covered her with kisses and childish coaxings which seemed in a measure to console her for what she had endured on his account, and he was dearer to her than ever. No real mother, she reflected, could love more deeply than she this child. Evening fell upon the grim castle and shadows darkened the Marquise's boudoir. Amélie, folding Baby's hands bade him pray, after which she placed him in bed. She barricaded the doors by drawing pieces of furniture against them and prepared to pass the night in vigil.

Suddenly a slight noise filled her with terror. It came from the mythologically wrought panels adorning the walls. It sounded like the gnawing of a mouse. The gnawing grew louder, the panel moved, revealing a door whose edges were the gilded framing, and Jean Vilon in his bridal clothes, the nuptial flowers in his breast, stood before her. He was a handsome man, the finest "gars" in that part of Brittany. Happiness made his dark face beautiful. She repelled her husband with a look of scorn which made him stand motionless.

"How dare you enter, Jean?" she demanded advancing upon him with a threatening look. "How dare you enter without my permission?

Did you not see that I had locked myself in? You come like a thief through a secret entrance which only you know. Wretch! Leave me this instant and never return. Do you hear? *Never!*"

Jean advanced in his turn, stammering:

"Mademoiselle, what do you mean? Are we not husband and wife? I have known the secret of that door since I was a boy, but I have never used it. You were safe under my protection. But now! By God and Saint Anne!—the priest has joined us!—"

Amélie, taking courage at his moderation, said still more scornfully:

"You say we are joined together? Idiot! Do you consider that service valid? Are you pretending innocence? Are you a fool or a knave? Are you the Duchess's creature or her victim? Do you not know how they have wrested from me my consent? Has no one told you that I married you to save the child's life?"

Jean stared at her in speechless amazement, and Amélie perceiving his ignorance, breathed more freely.

"Mademoiselle," he said at last, "I am neither a murderer nor a hypocrite."

"Then why have you married me, wretch?"

His eyes changed hue, resembling the sea water

which beats against the Coast of Brittany emitting at night phosphoric light.

"Because I love you, because I love you!" he cried, coming close to her, so close that she felt his breath. "Because my mistress told me that you were not as I had been told, a relative of the family. She said you were a peasant like myself, who had suffered misfortune and been abandoned by a scoundrel. Even knowing this," he concluded affectionately, "I loved you and was wild with happiness when she offered to marrry us."

"Vile calumniator!" hissed Amélie with flaming cheeks.

"My mistress also said that your father had rendered a service to her husband, the late Marquis, during the exile, giving that as the motive for your having been received in the castle. 'I wish now to further befriend the girl,' said she, 'by giving her a good husband. Are you ready to marry her? I will give her a dot of 75,000 francs.' But Mademoiselle, I agreed not because of the dot or the farm,—God confound me if I lie—but because I love you. Since you came, I have not slept a single night. If I closed my eyes I dreamed of you. I was like one bewitched." And he knelt at her feet, sobbing like a little child.

She was moved to pity and said:

"Jean, I see that you are a victim of the serpent also. Listen to the truth. I have married you because I was forced to, brutally forced. They were starving,—*starving* to death—do you hear?—that little child, who is no child of mine. Our marriage is a sacrilege in the eyes of God. By considering yourself my husband, you damn your own soul. Jean, beware of what you do!"

He rose and folded his arms across his breast.

"What you say may be true, Mademoiselle, and it hurts me to believe my mistress guilty of such conduct. But be the cause what it may, we are married. I am your husband; you are my wife; no power in heaven or earth can separate us. Whether the child is yours or not, matters little to me. Your life before I knew you concerns me not; I ask no questions. From today you are mine. Today you have been born anew, purer than water that falls from the clouds. I should defend you and the child to the death—I love you so much. You shall never again suffer, for now you belong to me. O if my mistress had not come to marry us, I should have killed you. You are holy to me, but my love is terrible. At last you are mine! O happiness!"

The Breton flung his arms around her.

Chapter VIII

DEATH

AMÉLIE sprang back, preparing for the struggle which the strength of the bridegroom would have rendered futile. The enameled clock rang out the hour of seven. The mythologically wrought panel opened again and a man entered.

Jean loosed his hold and stood petrified. The man advanced and asked in a terrible voice:

"What does this mean? What is going on in my house?"

"René!" cried Amélie, running to her lover who clasped her in his arms, regardless of the fire in Jean's eyes.

"Jean Vilon," said the master, "render an account of yourself. What has taken place in this castle? Unfaithful servant, how have you guarded this trust?"

Vilon trembled and knelt before René.

"Your lordship," he stammered, "your mother —the orders she brought me—from you."

"Orders? Were they not to refuse entrance to

anyone not giving the watch-word? Did my mother speak it, imbecile? Do I call you imbecile? I mean scoundrel. How have you treated this woman,—this woman who should be as holy to you as the Virgin?"

"Your lordship, it was the Duchess, the wife of my late master whose ashes rest in the chapel"—incoherently articulated Vilon. "Should I refuse her?—close the door in her face?"

"Certainly, beast!" cried René, losing all control of himself. "You owe obedience to me and to me only, though you die for it."

He clenched his fists and advanced upon Vilon, who, making no resistance, prepared to receive the blow. But Amélie, with the generosity of her upright character, interposed.

"René, do not debase yourself. Jean Vilon is in no wise to blame. He has believed your mother, thinking he honored you. When you sent him instructions, you could not foresee this possibility. Fate brought her. Jean is upright and faithful."

Her persuasive voice brought calmness to René, but a monstrous doubt seemed to find lodgment in his mind.

"Very well; now let us come to the point. What has happened here? Under what pretext

has my mother come with pretended messages from me? She surely has not foregone three days of frivolous court life for the pleasure of viewing country scenery. When I (for I have transformed myself into a professional spy) learned in Paris that she had taken the road to Brittany, I hastened after her, feeling sure that she was coming to Picmort. I met her just now on the road, unperceived by her party. I have entered the castle with my secret key and chosen this method of surprising you,—the same employed by the jealous Marquis who imprisoned his wife in this salon. Now, tell me what has happened. Come! the truth!"

Amélie remained silent, for not until that moment had she realized the extremity of the case, the nature of the confession she must make to her lover. Her customary valor forsook her.

"René," she faltered, "do not reproach me; forgive me, rather. Why have you delayed so long in coming? Why have you left me here defenceless? Why have you abandoned me?"

"Defenceless? Abandoned? And that fellow? Has he not protected you? He has orders to die for you. Tell me quickly what has been done. Answer, each of you. What does this mean?"

Amélie covered her face with her hands and

turning to the wall, burst into bitter weeping. René seized Vilon by the collar, shaking him violently and saying:

"Traitor, what have you done? Answer or I will choke you."

The Breton freed himself with so lithe a movement that the superiority of his physical strength was evident. Folding his arms on his breast, he said quietly:

"The Duchess arrived in a post chaise accompanied by the chaplain and two attendants. I opened wide the gate through which the lords of Picmort have always entered. I kissed her hand in respect. She spent three days here, giving orders and being obeyed. On the third, she decreed that I should marry this young lady—"

René leaped in rage.

"And—you married—her?" he shrieked.

"Yes."

"When—when?"

"Today, at four o'clock in the Picmort chapel."

"Devil!" roared René. "And you, Amélie, have you consented?"

"Yes," she wailed.

"This is superb!" and he laughed in fury. "Explain yourself, that I may then kill you. Did you fall in love with this fellow?"

"René!" she implored, sinking to his feet, "Have pity on me. I consented because your mother was starving to death before my eyes that little child we saved from the ship. O René, never call her mother again."

"Is that what she did?" stammered the Marquis, clasping his hands.

"Yes," she replied. "René, my father was right; the crimes of the mighty are expiated by the innocent. How can one hear a little child cry for bread and not save him? Yes, I have taken vows at the altar. I am the wife of your steward."

"Why did you marry her?" demanded René, turning furiously on Vilon.

"Because your mother said you wished it."

"Did you know of the child's starvation?"

"By the cross, I did not."

"And you dared to love her?"

"From the moment I saw her," he cried with impetuous sincerity.

"Aha! I find the motive. Obedience to the devil! So you loved her?"

"Your lordship, that was not the motive. I could never have dreamed of marriage had it not been for the Duchess—"

"Dog, only *I* am your master. Only *I*—"

"True, but here we are not accustomed to dis-

tinguish between the orders of your lordship and his mother. Parents represent God on earth."

"Jean is innocent. Another in his place would have acted likewise. Be just, René," said Amélie.

The steward looked on her in deep gratitude.

"René, your mother is the only culprit,—she and that fatality which dogs all who aid our cause. We carry misfortune with us. We should have told Jean our secret to begin with; we should have treated him as a friend, not as a menial. Then our enemies could not have deceived him. But how could we suspect that your mother had a suspicion of my presence here? René, a vicious womb has borne you—the womb of a hyena."

"Amélie," he groaned, "I do not attempt to defend my mother's conduct. She has acted like a fiend. But she is mentally incapable of planning the villainy. She was the instrument of the police. O Amélie, 'tis our parents who accomplish our ruin. Your father sets Volpetti free and my mother delivers you to another man. O I rave! You are mine, mine! No other man exists."

He clasped her hands and she gazed passionately up into his face, forgetful of Vilon, who frowningly beheld his honor as bridegroom affronted. At length René remembered the importunate presence, and sternly said:

"Begone!"

"You bid me go!" said the Breton, roused at length. "If I go my wife comes with me."

"Your wife!" laughed René scornfully. "This woman is not your wife, fool."

"The priest has joined us," insisted the peasant.

"Through a fraud,—a crime."

"That matters not. She has said 'Yes' at the altar. We are husband and wife before God."

René turned threateningly upon him and Vilon lowered his head. The idea of resistance never entered his brain, but neither could he entertain the idea of resigning Amélie. In body and soul he belonged to his master, the Marquis de Brezé; in body and soul she belonged to him, Jean Vilon.

Amélie placed herself beside her husband.

"Jean is right," she said. "He is indeed my master. Happiness has died and love also. Like you, I sought at first to break this bond—but I cannot,—we cannot. I expiate."

Tears flowed fast over her cheeks. Wild passion shot from Vilon's eyes. He longed to kneel before her and clasp her in his arms. He dug his nails into the palms to restrain himself. He hoarsely asked:

"Is this the woman your lordship has loved?"

"She was my promised wife. You have

undone me by one act, Jean Vilon," answered René in a voice of deep sadness.

Jean's mouth contracted. He suffered terribly, but he did not yield. He kept assuring himself that Amélie was his, his treasure. Only death could separate them."

René clutched the Breton's wrist and pressed it till the bones almost cracked.

"I repeat, Jean, you are the undoing of my life. But you shall not save your soul, if you persist, for a dreadful crime would follow. You refuse to give her up? Well, let me tell you who the woman is that you continue to call your wife. She is sacred, poor fool, and as inaccessible to you as the saints. Listen, dust of the earth. *She is of the race of kings*—do you hear?—you must never forget this fact—*of our kings!*"

Terror and wonder contorted the peasant's face. He transfixed Amélie with a look of superstitious reverence. The revelation exceeded his power of comprehension.

"The blood of the king martyred by the revolutionists is in her body,—the king for whom your father bore arms and fought hand to hand so often,—the king for whom he lay concealed in the woods and for whom,—do you remember, Jean?—he was shot, his body lying unburied

during seven days. If your father should now awake he would behold his son attempting to profane the daughter of that king! This is the crime to which you have lent yourself."

"Is this true?" asked Jean, turning upon Amélie a face contorted with fear and pain.

"Yes, Jean," she answered, her voice full of compassion. "I swear by my soul it is true."

"And the honor of Brezé confirms the oath," added René. "Retain the fruit of your iniquity. I leave you your wife. You no longer have a master. I shall go away forever."

"No," entreated Jean. "Rather I, rather I."

He crossed himself and grasped the amulets which hung around his neck. Then, swiftly approaching Amélie, he kissed her on the forehead. His lips burned and she shrieked in horror. He walked rapidly out of the boudoir. His heavy feet sounded for a moment in the ante-chamber, then on the stairway, the narrow winding stairway leading to the tower's highest story. René and Amélie listened. Suddenly divining his intention, they ran after him. The tiny room was dark when they reached it, the window was curtained by a heavy obstruction which they realized was Jean. They darted to clutch him, but he rolled out before their eyes. Deeply affected, they looked down

and beheld at the base of the tower the lifeles body of the grief-crazed Breton, with face up turned to the sky and glassy eyes gleaming amic the heavy blond hair. Silvano, the faithful mas tiff, sat beside him, howling despairingly.

Book V

THE SISTER

Chapter I

PORTENTS

THE apartments of the royal palace which we now enter are those farthest removed from the stir and distractions of the court. The perennial austerity of their august occupant seems to have imparted to them a religious gloom. Owners bestow themselves upon their belongings. The human soul leaves back of itself its peculiar track, either luminous or sombre.

The first impression made upon one entering the salons is of absolute silence. Noise would seem there a trespasser, a deep breath an infringing of etiquette. Servants and courtiers smother their voices and footfalls, suppress smiles and even dim the brightness of their eyes on addressing the Duchess,—the sad Duchess, who daily resembles more and more those rigid supplicating forms which guard sepulchres. After passing through a succession of reception rooms, screened from the sunlight by heavy draperies, and of appointments so symmetrically and solemnly

arranged that it seems impossible they should ev be moved from their places, we come to th Duchess's boudoir. Passing the dormitory an visitors' room, we lift a tapestry portière and ente the small apartment which is her oratory.

A richly wrought silver lamp is the only or nament, wherein float two burning wicks in per fumed oil. By the pale rays is discernible agains a black velvet screen, a large marble figure of the Christ. He is represented at the moment of expiring, just when his head falls on his shoulder and he cries: "It is finished!" At the foot of the altar kneels a woman in fervent prayer. She rests on a crimson prie-Dieu and her eyes are raised to the Christ. The light falls full on her face and we see it is the Duchess.

Beautiful had that face been in youth, but suffering has obliterated all trace of beauty. The hair once pale yellow,—the family color,—and so abundant that it was whispered she wore a wig, has now an ashen, almost a cobwebby look; the skin is yellow and marked with wrinkles; the dry eyes are inflamed with tears that do not flow. The lips are drawn tight,—the lips that neither laugh nor kiss. The clasped hands are emaciated and of waxen whiteness. Bitter thoughts seem to hover around the pale forehead,—cruel doubt and

insistent remorse. An expression of appalling incertitude, the terror of faith stripped of celestial consolation are there. Incoherent, rebellious words come from the lips.

At last, heaving a deep sigh, she arose, unclasped her hands and passed the right one over her forehead as though in an effort to banish her thoughts. Approaching the lamp, she unfastened two buttons of her waist and took from her bosom a roll of paper,—a letter. She glanced around, as if to assure herself that she was alone, and then began to read:

"My sister, well beloved: I live, I live; the hand of your brother directs these words; disregarding court etiquette, I assure you of my love—"

Here two timid raps sounded on the door and a gentle voice called: "Your Grace!"

The lady hastily replaced the paper and buttoned her bodice with an unsteady hand. By a strong effort of the will, she assumed the impenetrable mask she put on habitually and opened the door, with a look of cold surprise on her face. The attendant apologized profusely for the interruption.

"His—his—Royal Highness wishes urgently to speak with you. He has ordered me to—"

Without moving a muscle of her face, the

Duchess bowed in assent and, with the gait of an automaton, passed on to meet her husband, who awaited her in the visitors' room, a small apartment, containing a desk, some books of devotion and a few classics.

On her entry, the Duke saluted gravely as tho at an official ceremony. She seated herself, but he continued standing. He was tall and of patrician and martial bearing. She addressed him a mute interrogatory. The absence of cordiality between them was at once apparent.

"Thérèse, I come to trouble you and this I regret infinitely. But 'tis indispensable. I come to talk of state matters, that is of matters closely related to the state. Some time ago we banished this topic from our conversation, Thérèse, because —we happen to differ in our views. You find me somewhat—what phrase shall I use?—well, liberal. I find you obstinate,—opposed to making concessions and blind to the exigencies of the times. I am inclined to adopt the opinion of the King and Ferdinand; you, like our good father—but Thérèse, think as we individually may, we both desire the same accomplishment. At bottom there is harmony between us. I could not bear to believe otherwise."

"At bottom there is indeed harmony," she

answered. "Neither could I bear to believe otherwise. We are united, as is the entire family, in the faith that the Restoration is genuine—a victory over the dragon of the Revolution. You employ hidden weapons; I am less astute; I fight unarmed, or, as better said, I do not fight. I resist the foe, arms folded on my breast, and I should not retreat. I should face him to the last tho he advanced upon me with an overpowering host."

"The Corsican did not err when he said you were the only man of the family."

"Do not repeat that absurd speech. Each prince of the House is a man, a paladin, worthy of the race. Neither you nor your brother Ferdinand, notwithstanding his delinquencies respecting women, has given the lie to the proud blood which flows through your veins. I am a weak woman, whose only refuge, in hours of trial, is religion—the religion which has taught me to suffer resignedly, but never to yield. Much have I suffered; much am I yet to suffer."

A trembling convulsed her bosom and passed over her entire body, rustling the violet silk gown which she wore in half mourning. The Duke suppressed his annoyance. His wife's gloomy disposition had, from the first days of their marriage de convenance been a killjoy—

that marriage, consummated for political reasons and in compliance with the dying request of her parents. Somewhat of warmth, somewhat of human tenderness would have mingled those two souls, had not constraint been characteristic of both.

"Thérèse," he replied, "in every life there is a cup of bitterness. Each thinks that his chalice contains the most gall. Each knows but his own sorrow. God has tried us indeed, but have courage! I come with another sorrow to your heart already bleeding. Your strength must sustain you."

"Of what do you speak?" she asked, endeavoring to seem calm.

"Of the impostors, who have, in succession, exploited favorable circumstances in personating the unhappy prince who perished in captivity."

A deathlike pallor spread over her face.

"This is the reason you have come?" she murmured.

"Yes, this is the reason. The iniquitous farce grows of sufficient consequence to threaten the throne."

"Be explicit," she said, recovering command of herself.

"I am come for that purpose," he replied.

"The king has entrusted me with messages for you. He is fearful lest these spurious pretensions leave an ill effect upon you."

The Duchess drew a handkerchief across her eyes. Her husband and cousin continued:

"The fate of the young prince has brought sorrow to many. It has also been the cause of numerous schemes, and served as basis for ambitious delirium. An Austrian drummer declares before a council of war that he is your brother; another, whose brain has become addled from a bullet wound, is so insistent in his claims that it has been found necessary to incarcerate him in Bicetre; a servant in this asylum disputes with him the honor, by name Fontolive; a hunchback assistant to a notary follows suit and he will likely end his career in Bicetre; there is a Dufresne who displays on his right calf a fleur de lis. There are others too numerous to mention, including one who dresses like a woman. To enumerate them all would be to number the sands of the seashore. I shall speak only of the most audacious among them, of those who have succeeded in investing their ridiculous pretensions with the semblance of truth, namely a certain Fruchard, a man of brains and resolution; Hervagault, the son of a tailor who plays his

cards well indeed; Maturino Bruneau of Vezins, a most popular impostor; Baron Richemont, the most dangerous of them all, for he is a man of education, a profound student of history, and of irreproachable morals. Several gentlemen, formerly staunch royalists, have placed themselves in his ranks—"

The Duchess listened with attention, fixing upon her husband her inquisitorial eyes which cut like a keen knife. The Duke hesitated and she asked coldly:

"And what more? Is the list of farceurs ended?"

"No," he replied, making a visible effort to compose himself.

"There is another, Thérèse. He is seconded—O 'tis incredible!— by such men as René de Giac, whom we considered so devoted to the throne. His mother is inconsolable and no longer permits him to visit her. Besides René, there are La Rochefoucauld, Madame de Rambeau, who was the Dauphin's guardian during infancy, the family Saint Hilaire, the Marquis Feuillade, the Marquis de Broglio Solari—a legion, indeed."

"But you do not tell me this impostor's name," she asked in a bitter voice. "Whence comes he?"

"His name is William Naundorff and he comes

from England, though he has been brought up in Prussia."

The Duchess seemed about to swoon. Her head dropped upon the chair back and swayed from side to side. The Duke hastened to revive her by holding to her nose a flask of English smelling salts.

Chapter II

THE QUESTION

MORE through an effort of her strong will than because of the efficaciousness of the smelling salts, the Duchess sat upright and fixed upon the Duke her keen eyes.

"Why," she asked, "does the King desire that I should be so minutely informed? Why not settle the matter in those departments wherein the governmental thunderbolts are forged, since it is a question pertaining to statecraft? Can I not be left in peace, I the desolate survivor of the shipwreck?—I who ask only for solitude in which to pray."

"It is natural that we should consult you when THE PRINCIPLE is involved. Moreover, we depend upon your firmness and energy. You can offer us valuable suggestions, for no one has so imposing a conception of the royal dignity."

"That is because no one else has endured so much for the royal cause. I am the unhappiest woman on earth—" and her tears fell. "I wrote

so upon the walls of my prison and it is still the truth."

"Thérèse, what memories! What a tragedy!"

"In that prison," she exclaimed, "in that horrible prison, while we underwent the Via Crucis of outrages, there arose like a beautiful star, illuminating even the prisons and scaffolds,—there arose the PRINCIPLE. Only the PRINCIPLE is of moment; individuals are as nothing. What matter our sufferings or the blood that was spilled, or all the heads that fell if the PRINCIPLE remain the centre of life? But one head fell which incarnated the PRINCIPLE and it has cried for vengeance to God."

A fire glowed in her faded eyes, her heart beat so rapidly that the paper beneath the dress rustled. The Duke drew closer but made no effort to touch even her hands. No sweet transport had united these souls.

"I rejoice to see you thus, Thérèse," he murmured. "What has made the King fear your attitude on this question?"

"As the King has not suffered, he has no comprehension of the PRINCIPLE. I pray much for the King. He is a weakling."

"Not so today, Thérèse," the Duke interposed. "His Majesty's tastes differ, perhaps, from yours,

from ours; but when he beholds the ship of state in danger, then does he recover his spirit, rather then does he seem to, for in reality he never loses it. Because of his artistic and philosophical preoccupations and of his adherence to certain doctrines—which, to be frank, are not to my liking,—because of these, he regards at times indifferently what he eventually realizes to be of supreme importance. There are times when his imagination dominates him, but he has too great a mind to permit such impressions to be more than transitory. Do you remember the recent episode of the visionary Martin? Well, for a while the King was greatly troubled. He believed his end to be near."

"It is," she observed with no trace of emotion. "His infirmities increase rapidly."

"All the more reason," he rejoined, "that we should live cautiously. His Majesty's ill health may cause complications."

"And how does that fear affect your attitude with regard to—imposters?"

"Very closely. Old Martin insisted that one of the imposters was in reality your brother. May God preserve us from beholding the King a victim to that illusion. All imposters shall be rebuffed if we stand our ground. Their multi-

tude and diverse origins destroy whatever advantage any one of them may have gained. Tho human credulity is infinite, it seems to me impossible that they should make a lasting impression on the public or cause any of the European Cabinets to lose confidence in the government. This last consideration is of the greatest importance. Europe is at enmity with France, but the Holy Alliance has sustained us, has steadied the tottering throne, because *we* are the PRINCIPLE. Insidious rumors regarding your brother are being carried to the ears of European sovereigns. It is insistently claimed that he lives. The intervention of some foreign cabinet is imminent, which would carry in train disastrous results. Can we contemplate another invasion of France? How avoid it if the stigma of usurpers be attached to us?"

The Duchess's eyes were riveted on the carpet.

"Let us thank God," continued the Duke, "that amid the cohort of adventurers, charlatans and self-deluded fools which is recruited from all quarters, there is not one whose ability and certificates differentiate him sufficiently from the others to claim the attention of Europe. Should such a one arise and triumph over us, the Revolution which we have crushed would break forth

with redoubled fury. Thérèse, to outward appearance, we lie on a bed of roses; in reality, a volcano rumbles beneath our feet. We have to act with the greatest circumspection. We are watched, we are hounded. We, the men and women of the House Regnant of France, must be wise as the serpent and gentle as the dove; we must even make compromises. That is why I spoke (in my proclamation of Saint Jean de Lumiere) of crushing tyranny and breaking chains. That is why I have thro the columns of the Meridien prescribed limits to the zeal of our partizans, who demand blood in the celebration of our triumph. The King, therefore, would warn you that a false step, an impulse of generosity from your noble heart might—"

"Do I constitute so great a peril?" she sardonically asked.

"An immense peril,—that of your generous nature, your excessive,—no, I should not say excessive,—conscientiousness; but, Thérèse, it is so easy to be misled by our rectitude. Will you believe that my brother Ferdinand, in whom our hopes of succession lie, (here the Duchess winced) —for although his children have been girls, a boy may be born to him,—I repeat that Ferdinand in-

clines favorably toward the impostors—that is to say, not all of them, but one in particular."

She revealed her displeasure. Nothing so much irritated her as allusion to her sterility.

"Ferdinand," she began aimlessly.

"Yes, Ferdinand, following the generous impulses of his heart—or—for some reason—which—Well, Ferdinand cannot think and act as we do—because he has lived—has been the slave of his passions. Indeed, his life resembles, in certain respects that of the impostor whom he supports. He also lived for a period obscurely and in London, forming there ties with a woman of the people. You remember Amy Brown and the children she bore him. When one's antecedents have not been of a licit character, one is predisposed to make extraordinary excuses for others. You and I are not of that kind, Thérèse. We may proudly hold up our heads. Ferdinand has decided to believe that your brother lives, and, in consequence, places faith in whatever impostor raises his head, saying that one among them is Charles Louis."

The Duchess trembled, notwithstanding her attempted impassivity.

"My father," resumed the Duke, "alarmed at his attitude, has remonstrated with him but to no purpose other than that of prevailing upon him to

cease making public display of his opinions. He therefore no longer proclaims them from the housetop. You, Thérèse, employing the influence with which your virtues invest you, must caution Ferdinand and his wife, Caroline, against indiscretions. Insist that the members of the royal family must act in harmony. What would be the consequence of the slightest admission?" And, as she remained silent, he added, "You do not answer."

"Yes, yes, I am about to answer. For three nights I have not slept and for three days I have prayed continually. O, if among those who assume my brother's name, there be one who presents proofs,—do you hear?—irrefutable proofs, to such a one we have no right to apply the epithet impostor. If he bear incontestable documentary evidence, should we longer doubt? You know well that Charles Louis's death certificate has never been found. The copy which exists is not authentic."

Lowering her voice still more, even though aware that they could not be overheard, she continued:

"You know also that I went incognito to the Hospital of Incurables and interviewed the cobbler's wife. Notwithstanding my disguise, the unfortunate woman knew me and said: 'I am

not insane. They have placed me here to silence me. The boy lives.'"

The Duke paced feverishly up and down.

"There are a thousand testimonials and asseverations by conscientious persons who have recognized this claimant. He says things which only my brother can say. And as the time has come to speak the whole truth, I shall tell you that he has written to me. His letter has rested here three days; it burns like a live coal. It burns my fingers and my heart."

She pulled the paper from her bosom and placed it before him.

"I had thought myself incapable of tears. I had wept so much that it seemed impossible to weep always. But this letter has unsealed my tear ducts. This man knows only what my brother would know. He entreats an interview. He wishes me to decide his claim. He asks that my heart be judge, though he offers to bring documentary proofs which any court would sustain. Why do we refuse to hear him?"

The Duke's perturbation increased.

"Thérèse," he said at length, "your affection for your dead brother is so well known that these pretenders seek to exploit that affection. Beware! An imprudent act may blight the dynasty and

France; be the ruin of us all. It rests with you to avert this impending disaster."

"With me? Why with me?"

"Yes, with you," he said almost harshly. "Why did you refuse the embalmed heart sent you by the physician who performed the autopsy on the dead boy in the tower? It was a mistake,—a terrible mistake. The public got wind of it—"

"You say I should have received that offering? —that heart which never beat in my brother's breast? You dare reproach me with that refusal? Answer me this: why has the King refused up to this day to be anointed? Why has the Pope forbidden us to celebrate Charles Louis's funeral rites? Have you forgotten the singular proceeding of suspending the mortuary ceremony after the church has been draped in black and the clergy vested? Have you forgotten the Nuncio's announcement: 'The Church offers up requiem masses only for the dead?'"

The Duke was dumb.

"Listen," she continued. "Last night as I lay awake the voice of my mother came to me softly and full of tears. She said only: 'Marie Thérèse! Marie Thérèse!'"

Losing control of herself, the Duchess sobbed aloud, her face in her hands.

"We must restore the stolen crown, descend from the usurper's throne. Ferdinand is right. Why fight an unworthy battle? There are proofs before which we must recede. You say I am the only man of the family. 'Tis that I am the only member of the family who looks the situation in the face. Tell the King that there is but one way of demonstrating his courage; to deliver up his ill gotten goods and make restitution."

The Duke unable to find his voice, mutely rose. Saluting his wife with the same reverential air he had employed on entering, he passed out of the door.

Chapter III

REASONS OF STATE

THE interior of the King's cabinet contrasted strikingly with the apartment we have just left. Here we find a veritable museum arranged by an intelligent hand which has collected something of the most beautiful in each esthetic epoch.

The Monarch stretched upon his invalid's couch, surrounded by cushions, his limbs bandaged, converses with his Minister of Police. A fire glows on the hearth, notwithstanding the warmth of the apartment, all the windows and doors being closed. 'Tis the loving heart of the young Countess Cayla that has designed the arrangement of furniture, etc., with the effect of securing the greatest comfort.

Disease makes noticeable ravages in the royal countenance, which, though still expressing a keen intellectual and reflective penetration, even a repressed enthusiasm, begins to become bloated by an insidious edema. The eyes, back of their

swollen lids, betray blood decomposition. When the King changes his position, a medicinal odor floats through the elegant apartment, notwithstanding the profusion of rare flowers in alabaster Pompeian vases,—prodigies of antique art,—flowers, brought by the Countess to her invalid friend.

The King economized his conversational forces, replying only when necessity compelled: his words were always affluent and opportune. He listened attentively to the Minister, who was saying:

"Greater danger has never threatened the monarchy. I have long foreseen the evil. 'Tis of many years' standing. My predecessors—I must do them justice—took every precaution to obviate the result. Le Coq in Berlin endeavored to prevent what today seems imminent."

Lecazes took a pinch of snuff, and resumed:

"Your Majesty cannot doubt my zeal and activity. My devotion to the cause has been demonstrated. I have never vacillated in critical moments, never weakly yielded to circumstances. But in spite of my efforts and circumspection, a catastrophe stares us in the face."

The King listened attentively and the Minister went on.

"I have endeavored to spare your Majesty the

annoyance of listening to these alarms. I come now to appeal for your help, for only you may avert the danger.

"One of my deputies, the most resourceful of all, my right hand, indeed, by name Volpetti, who for a time was in the service of Caroline, Queen of Sicily;—this Volpetti has for years tracked that—that dangerous creature. So far he has subjected him to living in a position in which mischief was impossible of accomplishment. He has been incapacitated for the attaining of any real advantage. This Volpetti was bequeathed me by Fouché. He was employed in the surveillance of the individual in question when I became Minister. During Napoleon's ascendancy, Volpetti kept this individual well concealed in a Vincennes dungeon; but the Empress Josephine, with the end of employing him as a weapon in view of the contingent divorce, adopted the policy of befriending and, finally of liberating him. After leaving Vincennes, our individual turns up in Prussia. As he had no civil status, he could give no trouble. He was *nobody*. At that time, Volpetti conceived a brilliant idea, that of playing the friend. He lent him a passport bearing a fictitious name and authorizing him to reside in Spandau. The individual has never been able to shuffle off his

name. O there is no prison so secure as a name."

"Nevertheless," interposed the King, "when one possesses documents proving one's identity—"

"I am coming to that," said the Minister, waving his hand in order to dispel apprehension. "The preservation of those documents, thro all these years of vicissitudes is the knot which I cannot unravel. Whence come they? I conjecture they procede from Barras (with his mania for collections), and that he gave them to Josephine. She in turn placed them with Montmorin, who planned his es ape and who was subsequently killed in a skirmish. Those papers constituted an infernal magazine which threatened to explode at any moment. Volpetti rested not in his search for them, but they were skilfully concealed. As a last resort, he insinuated into the life of the individual a woman, excellent hearted and who was persuaded that she rendered a veritable service by advising him to deliver the papers to Le Coq."

"And did he?" inquired the King in graceful irony. "I wager that the woman attained her ends."

"Yes, your Majesty, he delivered certain papers, but the most important ones he kept—the devil

knows where. He preserves them to this day in a casket."

"Next to woman, the gravest perils to man are documents," murmured the King in persistent irony.

"Realizing the impossibility of recovering the papers from Le Coq, the individual subsided. He is of a pacific temperament, tending to inaction and retirement. He married and devoted himself to his trade of watch-making—"

"'Tis a family proclivity," observed the King.

"I was saying he is devoted to watch-making and the care of his several children, among whom there is a daughter, who as a contrast to her father's impassivity, is action and energy incarnate. It was his ill fortune to be indicted as an incendiary and counterfeiter and to serve sentence at hard labor in Silesia—"

"Did this ill fortune come to him in consequence of the cautious policy of my astute friend and Minister, Lecazes? Let us have no figures of rhetoric here."

"Your Majesty, when matters arrange themselves in favorable combinations, a wise man loses no time in hesitation. The sentence passed was so favorable to our cause, was so strong a card to reserve, should the individual carry his

claims before a tribunal. Think of it! Counterfeiter, incendiary!—sufficient, I should think, to deter members of the nobility from advocating his cause, should they be inclined to do so. Should we complain if hams be rained into our mouths? Shall we bewail the great number of impostors and dupes who have appeared from all quarters, finally occasioning so much skepticism among the people that one more or less makes no difference to them?"

Again the King smiled.

"Come," said he, delighting to pierce the diplomatic artifices of his minister, "I agree that we have no reason to complain; above all when it appears that among the horde of spurious Dauphins there is one bearing marks not unknown to us. Let us talk as men who have learned to vanquish their conscience; surely we shall not display such bad taste as to become pedantic moralists."

Lecazes smiled in his turn.

"I do not think," continued the royal invalid in whimsical banter, "that you class me among the abettors of my nephew; Ferdinand's ardent wish is to embrace his recovered cousin. Lecazes, prepare to hand in your resignation on the day of my death."

"Happily for us, your Majesty is much stronger

than you yourself believe. Long life and long reign have you in prospect."

Having delivered himself of this flattery, he resumed:

"It is stated in the court records that the chief cause of the individual's condemnation was the indignation produced by his absurd pretensions. He was not proved guilty. He stated that he had been born a prince and this lost him the respect of the court. My complaint of the proceedings is that the sentence was for so brief a term. To imprison a man for a season is only to make him more set in his convictions. When liberated he is more dangerous than ever. If your Majesty were to ask my opinion of this man, I should say he was less knave than visionary. Owing to the stupidity of the Prussian police, it has been impossible to discover a trace of his ancestry or place of birth. He claims that this failure to produce confuting evidence proves his claim, and he speaks logically there"

"He does indeed."

"Well, our—maniac left prison more than ever determined to sustain his pretensions. To the children that were sucessively born to him he gave such names as Amélie (in memory of the flight); Marie Antoinette, Charles, Edward. This may

seem inoffensive, but 'tis far from being so. Persistency in this fixed idea has continued to envelop him more and more in a tattered purple mantle. His sceptre is a reed in truth, but it gives him, nevertheless, the appearance of a persecuted martyr. Your Majesty will agree that our individual is not to be placed in the same category as the multitude whom, after disproving, we have endeavored to construct into a parapet serving as a blockade to effectually shut out possible pretenders bearing credentials having the appearance of genuiness."

"I agree with you that this is a grave matter."

"That aureole of martyrdom elicits faith and devotion. For example, when the individual on leaving prison established himself in Crossen, with not a sou in his purse, he found there a magistrate who gave him a large sum of money and became a champion of his cause. His enthusiasm became so pronounced that the prince of Coralath's secretary was obliged to observe to the fellow that Prussia contained dungeons for the reception of those who meddle in what does not concern them. The remark having no effect, the magistrate soon received in heaven the reward for his devotion to the cause."

"Did he die?" inquired the King.

"He did, your Majesty, from a sudden illness. We have reason to believe that he and no other was the guardian of the cursed documents, those explosives. When dying, he spoke incoherently of the prince's papers."

"Why was the opportunity not improved?"

"Unfortunately I was not on hand. The police got wind of the death and confiscated what papers they could lay their hands on, but those desired were evidently well concealed. The German police have leaden feet and heads of straw. Was it not childish to search for evidences in the house of the suspected man? A fool indeed would he have been to hide them there. Not less than ten times has the impostor's house been raided, under pretext of fire or burglary or what not, but to no purpose. They have not been near him. But lately since his residence in England he has kept them, for in England we have not so free a field—"

"He has lived in England?"

"Yes, your Majesty, he moved there from Prussia, realizing that a country whose cabinet was not on friendly terms with ours and in which respect for the home is carried to great lengths, was a more appropriate habitat for him than Prussia. In England our individual, ceasing to write letters to influential personages of Europe

and failing to receive the desired recognition, devoted himself to watch-making and chemistry. He is said to have invented a new explosive."

"Why then has he been molested? When a man lives inoffensively—"

"Your Majesty, he was not disturbed, tho we continued to watch him. Our suspicions were aroused when we learned that he had sent his eldest daughter to France. This girl is an able strategist, a second edition of La Mothe. She caught in her net no less a nobleman than the Marquis de Brezé."

"Eve enters the garden," piquantly observed the King.

"Matters became complicated indeed. The girl sought nothing less than the undermining of the throne. I tried to sever the cords by making the Duchess of Rousillon—"

"That inflated hen? Competent agent indeed!"

"I commissioned her to reveal the antecedents of the girl's father to the infatuated Marquis. But Love was blind as usual, and the Marquis slipped through our hands and arrived in England just in time to save his prospective father-in-law's life."

"His life? Who threatened his life?"

"Oh, pickpockets! one of those nocturnal encounters so common in London streets. That is

an unimportant detail in our narrative. We are reaching the heart of the matter. The girl had captured the Marquis with the aim of establishing in the very camp of French aristocracy a following for her father. The precious documents were confided to René and a journey to France arranged, the three to meet in Dover."

"And how have you ascertained these particulars, Baron?"

"Should I be doing my duty, did I not gather every particular? My business is to know all things regarding this infernal plot. Volpetti no sooner learned where the confederates were to meet than he arranged to put up at the same inn. He possessed himself of the papers by the cleverest strategy—"

The King, unmindful of his disabled limbs, half jumped from the couch.

"Then we are saved!" he cried. "For Volpetti surely destroyed them at once."

"Your Majesty, I never trust my agents implicitly. I spy upon my spies. Fruits of research I require to be always delivered into my hands. Otherwise, they might report to me that damning testimony has been destroyed, and meanwhile retain the deadly weapon, to turn it at any moment

against me. No, they have express orders to destroy nothing."

"You were saying that Volpetti obtained possession of the papers."

"Yes; now the imbroglio becomes more complicated. A new power intervenes in the individual's behalf. Can your Majesty guess whom I mean?"

"The Carbonari."

"Precisely; the Carbonari,—the association which plants mines under our feet, and which carries on the Revolution beneath the earth. They have written on their statutes: 'The Bourbons have been brought back by foreigners; the Carbonari will restore to France freedom of choice.' Your Majesty, this society has members in every department of government; they are numerous in the army; they exist even in the Royal Council. They make it impossible for us to obliterate devotion to Napoleon; they constitute an incessant protest against the established régime."

"How the devil did the Carbonari become the champions of this pretender?"

"A countermine, your Majesty. It happened that in Dover at the same inn were two members of the order having unsettled scores from old Italian days against Jacome Volpetti."

"My friend, the spy who was set upon the individual should have had no unsettled scores pending with members of the Carbonari."

Lecazes winced, tho he was well aware that the words had for their sole object giving annoyance to him. He continued:

"Well, the Carbonari succeeded in murdering the police agent who accompanied our spy. They then despoiled Volpetti of the papers, after which they carried him, tied and gagged, aboard a French vessel, whose captain was also a member of the association. He would have been murdered also, had he not succeeded in freeing himself and leaping into the sea, from which he was rescued by an English schooner. The French vessel gave chase and so riddled the other by cannon balls, that, unable to defend herself, and being moreover the victim of a fire which—"

"Bravo, Lecazes, redoubtable romancer!" exclaimed the King mockingly.

"Your Majesty, I relate history, beside which romancing is a tame art. Well, to resume: in spite of piracy and conflagration, Volpetti reached the coast near Pleneuf. At the same time, unaware of their enemy's salvation, the two Carbonari, de Brezé, Naundorff and his daughter disembarked also on French soil."

"How do you explain the coalition of the Carbonari and the pretender?"

"Your Majesty is well aware that, provided they work against the present administration, the association has carte blanche to make such combinations as are considered best. In that branch of the Carbonari known as Knights of Liberty, each member is free to follow his own judgment, to take risks and accept consequences. The Knights of Liberty constitute the germinating centre of crime. Notwithstanding the dispatch with which Volpetti issued warnings that the party be denied entry into Paris, he was outwitted. They arrived. The individual is *here*, beneath the powerful shelter of the association. The documents are doubtless well guarded. All efforts to obtain them by violence would be in vain. I have not the slightest clue to their place of concealment."

"Is de Brezé with the pretender?"

"Yes, and one of the Carbonari, an Italian."

"Where is the girl?"

"She has been placed for security in the Castle of Picmort. She was guarded by one of the Carbonari, but this man has started on one of those journeys which are characteristic of the society."

"Do you not consider it possible that the girl carries the documents?"

"I do not think so. In the first place, de Brezé through chivalry,—and he is a Paladin—would never give her a charge of grave peril; besides, the place for those papers is Paris."

"Then peace and happiness to the maiden in her Picmort refuge!" sighed the King.

"The Duchess informs me that the steward of the castle may prove a formidable rival to the Marquis in the affections of the fascinating intriguante."

"My blessing on the sylvan pair! An eclogue, indeed! A peasant lover!" remarked the King with a Voltairian laugh, after which he hummed:

"In the lap of Phillis
Damon streweth flowers
Wet with dews of morning."

Lecazes, not heeding the poetical interruption, continued:

"With regard to the documents, your Majesty, a subject which seems to bore you, I affirm that they are in Paris, because, among other reasons, the individual would have need of them in order to convince Madame the Duchess, whom it is his intention of addressing—"

"Also Ferdinand, I suppose—"

"Ferdinand is already convinced. Is your Majesty, perchance, ignorant that he recognizes

the pretender? But his action is of no moment compared to that of Madame, the Dauphin's prison companion. Madame should be warned."

"What plan do you propose, Lecazes? As for me, I confess myself incompetent to forge methods of outwitting a woman."

"Listen, then. If we might arrange that Madame shall receive the individual—"

"What!" exclaimed the King.

"If she will grant him this secret interview and exact that he deliver to her the documents, in order that she may become convinced of his identity—"

The King applauded, cordially, sonorously, as tho he were a spectator at a theatrical representation,—the only character, he used to say, that suited him. He rendered homage to his Minister's genius.

"Enough!" he exclaimed. "I comprehend."

"Your Majesty divines the rest?"

"I divine, my friend, but—"

Lecazes radiantly took a pinch of aromatic snuff, and asked:

"But what?"

"But who is to tie the bell on the cat's neck? Who is to persuade my niece—"

"Her husband may convince her."

"Her husband? Lecazes, you and I are not

children. My good nephew Louis is unacquainted with the art of influencing his wife. He treats her with such profound respect that—well, they fail utterly to understand each other. Whence comes this awkwardness in the second generation in dealing with women? Louis is my reproach, though I must admit that Ferdinand does me honor. Besides, Lecazes, you know well that I have instructed Louis to advise his wife to act as tho no such impostor exists."

Steps sounded in the adjoining apartment.

"Silence!" said the King. "'Tis Ferdinand or Louis."

A moment later, the elegant martial figure of the Duke appeared in the door.

"You arrive opportunely, nephew," said Louis XVIII, as the Duke respectfully kissed his hand. "Be seated and give us news. What says Marie Thérèse?"

"Sire, I do not bring you pleasant news. Madame is strangely exalted. She has received a letter from that—man, which she carries over her heart."

"Repress your jealousy," replied the King in banter.

"I experience only sadness," replied the Duke with sincerity. "She suffers greatly and I suffer

with her. She has not slept for three nights nor eaten for three days. She passes hours in prayer—"

"That is your fault!"

"Mine, sire?" exclaimed the Duke.

"Emphatically so, my little Louis. When a woman, such as is your wife, a woman who would die rather than even look at another man,—when she becomes sad, 'tis that her husband is indifferent. Listen; the time has come when I must speak the truth: you have behaved like a simpleton. You have never won her heart. You have treated her with a veneration such as the devoté evinces toward the marble statues of saints."

"Sire, you know well that I am more in my element at the head of a regiment than with women. I do not understand them."

"The devil! This cursed generation seems to have been born blasé, destitute even of a sense of beauty. The reason that I love your brother Ferdinand is that he is the living reproduction of our ancestor, Henry of Navarre. The 'ultras' are scandalized at his romance with the English girl. Well, we must beautify our life with illusion or we should become stone. I have kept my heart in its place always, even though I have

been a wretched invalid. Not that I have given myself up to material joys. We become divine through that exaltation evoked by the presence of woman. The Countess is the intermediary between soul and faith,—faith in the beautiful. You know that here there is no possibility of descent into matter—An old man in ruined health!"

The Duke frowned, struggling between respect for his uncle and repugnance towards his theories.

"In short, Louis, my aching limbs are already in the grave. I have done all in my power to protect the institutions in my charge. I have subjugated my convictions, my reason, my skepticism, in order to be true to the trust confided to me. With my right hand I have restrained the Revolution; with my left the excesses of an imbecile and sanguinary Reaction. Lecazes has aided me and aids me. But Louis, my heir, if you falter, I shall contend no longer, even tho the monarchy perish. In vain will you have combatted at the pass of Ivon, at Ravenheim and afterwards, beside the unfortunate Eugene. Bah! The hardest battles are these of state, my son."

The Duke was moved. When the King discarded his habitual raillery, he evinced genuine

majesty. Almost subjugated, he knelt at his uncle's feet, saying:

"What can I do for the monarchy, for God? I am willing to give my life, if necessary."

"Much less than that is required," replied the King, affectionately. "All that I ask is that you act the part of an affectionate husband, which you are; that you treat your wife tenderly, passionately—"

"To what end, Sire?"

"Lecazes will inform you, for I am greatly fatigued. I must be careful of my forces, as tomorrow will be Wednesday and the Countess Cayla will be here to make some hours heaven to me."

Chapter IV

CONJUGAL LOVE

THAT evening at the customary hour for lighting the lamps in the various apartments of the royal palace, the ladies in waiting to Madame the Duchess were surprised to see her accompanied by her husband on leaving the table. As the august pair entered the Duchess's apartments, the attendants discreetly withdrew and the lady motioned the Duke to a seat; but he, with unaccustomed gallantry, hastened to place himself beside her on the sofa and with the precipitation characteristic of a limited experience in conjugal affectionate demonstration, seized both her hands and effusively began:

"Thérèse, do you remember what anniversary it is tomorrow? The tenth of June, our marriage day?"

"Indeed?" she replied. "How slowly time passes."

"To me it seems as tho we had been married yesterday. 'Twas in the little chapel of

Mittau. Listen, Thérèse: I fear at times that I have not made you happy. Am I mistaken? You treat me so distantly."

"I have been—happy," she stammered. "You know that it is not in my nature to be violently so."

"The time of mourning has passed," he said, kissing her slender patrician hands. "Look back no longer. Those who have suffered as much as we have a right to happiness."

Her face flushed as his warmth increased.

"To live and rejoice!" she sighed. "That is not my destiny, nor yours, Louis. We have greater trials in store. I feel their approach. I told you this morning that we have not sufficiently expiated."

"My Thérèse, you who are so good a Christian should not impugn the justice of God. Have you not suffered sufficiently to appease Him? Have you not even the right to breathe? Do you experience no emotion now that your husband is at your side? Were the reasons of state which prescribed our marriage not in accord with your sentiment? Would you choose me again if you were free? Can you not love?"

She blushed to hear these extraordinary words. His transformation was wonderful and seemed to be changing her, the austere Duchess, into a girl of twenty.

"Louis," she answered with noble simplicity, "since the death of my parents, I have loved only you. I fear at times that God will punish this excessive devotion to a creature."

"Cousin, wife," he ardently exclaimed, "'tis God's will that we love each other. You know well that tho at times I seem absorbed and cold, I am never even in thought unfaithful. Have you any complaint, any accusation?"

"I have believed," she replied, "that you did not love me. But I have never doubted you. That would have been unendurable."

He clasped her to his breast.

"Since you are so well convinced of my love," he whispered, "you will grant a request, you will permit me to influence that upright conscience that noble heart."

She drew herself away instinctively, but he clasped her more closely, and she remained a happy prisoner.

"My wife," he pursued, "you are under the domination of a great sorrow. This morning you were almost hysterical. I suffered in seeing you so troubled. Now, we must be absolutely frank with one another. I fear for your reason if you continue to torment yourself about an ambitious fool. Listen to me and listen tranquilly. You

clear intelligence has become temporarily clouded. Your mind will soon recover its lucidity. You are now of the opinion that the man is being victimized, whereas he is nothing more than a keen-witted impostor, bolder and armed with more formidable documents than his predecessors."

"Do you really believe that the writer of this letter is an impostor?"

"Well, not precisely an impostor, Thérèse,—a dupe, rather, believing himself to be the prince. 'Tis a frequent phenomenon. Our reason is subject to such fluctuations that one is capable of confusing even his own individuality with that of another. You doubtless remember the case of the Spanish pie-vender who believed himself King Sebastian; or Pougatchef of Russia who under the name of Demetrius claimed the throne."

"What of the documents mentioned in the letter which he maintains would confirm his claim before any French tribunal?"

"Little by little. To begin with, we are not certain that they exist. Have you seen them? Doubt, then, of their existence, until you have them in your hands for examination. Let us suppose that the documents are genuine, does it therefore follow that the possessor is the prince? So great has been the confusion caused by the

Revolution, unscrupulous persons have acquired such unrestricted power, our family secrets have been so profanely exploited, that 'twould be no wonder indeed that the papers should be in the hands of the veriest adventurer."

She remained silent, but the voice she loved so well opened an ever widening breach in her faith.

"Reflect," he continued, "how the Revolution has scattered important papers. Great frauds have stood upon stolen or spurious documents. But in this instance 'tis evident that the entire plot has for its object the exploitation of your credulity and tender memories. In order to prove whether his claim be true or false, subject your correspondent to a test."

"Louis," she said, clasping her hands, "on listening to you, my reason vacillates. My God, what shall I do?"

"Bid the man come to you."

"Did you not this morning express disapproval of my receiving him?"

"I have changed my mind. You must grant him a secret interview. You must discover the nature of those documents. Require him to bring them to you. You surely do not intend to take his word for it that they exist. Get possession of his proofs and then we shall be able to judge.—Now,

let me tell you something of this man's past life. You know nothing of his history, tho he is proposing to throw himself into your arms. He belongs to the lowest class of Prussian people. His father was a mechanic, son of a kettle-mender. Until very recently he has been a watch-maker. He has been convicted of two grave crimes,—counterfeiting and arson. He has served a sentence at hard labor in a Silesia prison. What say you, Thérèse, to the seating upon the throne of Saint Louis a felon whose wrists and ankles have borne infamous manacles?"

She looked affrightedly at her husband.

"You are horrified? Well, you have heard but the beginning. This man was the victim of misery owing, in all probability, to his vices. He was rescued by a woman. This woman, many years his senior, was for a long period his—Thérèse I dare not explain the relation to you. I respect you too highly to pronounce the revolting words. But what do you say to the artifice of calling this woman his sister? Can you longer believe it probable that his body holds the royal blood?"

The blow was well aimed. The color mounted to the Duchess's face and she assumed an indignant attitude. The Duke caressed her consolingly:

"After that unsavory episode, he contracted

matrimony. His wife is a woman of the lowest origin, vulgar, insignificant. But, in compensation, he has an ambitious daughter, a veritable phenomenon indeed. 'Tis not an ordinary spectacle, that of a girl of eighteen or nineteen occupying herself with vaulting schemes—"

"Perhaps not with vaulting schemes," rejoined the Duchess meditatively. "Nevertheless at eighteen there exists a clear comprehension of duty and expediency—"

"O Thérèse, *you*, you were early matured through suffering."

"And perhaps this young girl also."

The Duke was silent. He regretted the turn their conversation had taken. He sought not to awaken pity, so he suddenly faced his battery in another direction.

"Your would-be brother, the Prussian mechanic seeks to found a new religion. He is therefore a heretic, which is reason sufficient for excommunication and deprivation of the Church's sacraments."

These words produced an extraordinary effect upon the Duchess. She was a fervent Catholic devotee, intensified by the Revolution. Her cheeks burned and her eyes shot anger.

"Not only does he profess heresy," resumed

the Duke, "but he proclaims and propagates his doctrines. He has written a book entitled 'The Heavenly Doctrine.' It contains an arraignment of the Church and interprets arbitrarily the Holy Scriptures. 'Tis clear that his motive in attacking Catholicity is retaliation, the Pope having refused to indorse his absurd pretensions. His marriage was according to Protestant rites. It is claimed that he reckons as a saint that old Martin who pretends revelations from the archangel Raphael."

"The King has received that old man," remarked the Duchess. "It is said that he spoke dreadful prophecies. The hand of God weighs heavily upon us!"

"Thérèse, it is unworthy a strong intelligence to attach importance to such nonsense. The old idiot would today be in a mad-house but for the indulgence of the King."

"Well," said she, making a great effort, "am I to grant this interview, then?"

"Certainly, that your mind may be at rest. Light drives away phantoms. The King desires you to receive the man. Make it a condition that he bring the documents. Arrange that the conference be secret, for 'tis necessary to proceed with the greatest caution. Our enemies are vigilant. Thérèse, I hold forth both arms to

sustain the tottering throne, but shall be powerless unless you help me. Have I in you an ally? You and I must not work at cross purposes."

He clasped his wife in his arms, uttering endearing words which seemed a promise of new days, full of happiness, and of a perfect union. The Duchess listened rapturously to the husband whom the state and church had given her. Her smothered youth rose in a strong tide. She realized that the grief which had really oppressed her through so many years was the glacial attitude which she and the Duke had maintained towards each other. Closing her eyes, she leaned upon his breast. He folded her in his arms and led her into the adjoining apartment, her dormitory, through which they passed into the oratory. They walked to the crimson prie-Dieu and knelt together upon the velvet cushion. Holding her hand tightly, he solemnly said:

"Before God, who hears us, Thérèse,—sole woman that exists on earth for me,—and He knows I speak the truth,—promise me that you will save the royal House of France from perishing, that you will not permit the impious to rejoice nor the enemies of the cause to triumph, that you will prevent the sacred oil from being poured upon the head of this counterfeiter, this

incendiary, this heretic. If he be an impostor, 'twould be sacrilegious; if he be not an impostor (to state an impossible case) his accession to the throne would let loose again license and unbridled passions which would precipitate a second Revolution. Promise, Thérèse. Swear!"

She raised her eyes to the crucifix. The thorn-crowned face against the dark background seemed, in a sublime melancholy, to murmur: "Father forgive them—" The oath died on her lips.

"Swear, Thérèse, my love, my wife!" repeated the Duke.

Tears coursed down her face as she groaned: "I swear, my God, I swear," and sank in a nervous paroxysm into her husband's arms. He had triumphed. Sustaining her, he led the Duchess from the oratory.

Chapter V

THE SISTER

IN the sitting-room of a small inn whose sign reads "Hotel d'Orleans" sat the five persons whom the Polipheme brought to France. Amélie, no longer a fresh radiant girl, and in deep mourning for her husband, Jean Vilon, sits beside René who whispers:

"When shall I see you light-hearted, Amélie? I am jealous of the dead. He robs me of you."

"What else may I do than wear black? He was a great heart. Do not wonder at my grief, René."

Naundorff's face was almost transfigured. He looked twenty years younger. He seemed to have lost consciousness of his past sufferings. Joy obliterated sorrow and his lips were wreathed in smiles.

"My friends," he was saying, "I reproach myself for having doubted of human justice. Early or late, the human heart turns to good as the body to earth. This is the happiest moment

of my unhappy life. I am about to receive a great consolation and greatly did I require it, for on reaching Paris, my old wounds were reopened. To return here after so many years and with such a record fastened to my name! I have visited my parents' prison. Yes, I have had the courage to do so. I am a man of memories. The tower has already been demolished. What haste to obliterate my past! In the remainder of the building a convent has been established, to which I have been refused admittance. I was brave enough to walk on the bloody ground whereon my mother—"

Amélie rose and threw her arms around her father's neck.

"Why do I dwell on this theme?" he asked, resuming his radiant expression. "Has not my destiny changed aspect? In spite of what we have suffered on the voyage, in spite of what you, my loved Amélie, have suffered, I say: 'Blessed be the hour in which I left London! Blessed the inspiration whereby I saved that wretch! These things have been registered to my credit. Blessed the faith I had in the one person who can save me and whose heart throbs at the sound of my name!'"

He fervently crossed his hands in an attitude of prayer.

"It is my duty to announce to you the secret of my happiness. You have cast your lives into my cause and braved even death. But danger has at last ceased; and the sun has chased away the clouds. I am happy, happy. O how strange that word sounds on my lips!"

Louis Pierre fixed on Naundorff a penetrating look and said:

"Monseigneur, we are waiting to know in what that happiness consists—"

"Listen, listen. This morning at about eleven o'clock a most affable gentleman brought me a message in answer to a letter I had written,—can you guess to whom?"

Then with his heart in his voice, he added:

"My sister, my sister!"

There was a moment of silence. Then Amélie asked almost sharply:

"Are we to infer that Madame does not know how to write?"

"My dear child, what more can she do than send me word she will receive me—"

"Receive *us?*" asked the girl.

"No, myself only. Amélie, consider that you are a stranger to her, whereas I am the companion of her childhood, the boy who wept and suffered with her during captivity. She consents to see me,

Do you think this little? I asked only that much, for I know that once together, she will run to embrace me. O that embrace!"

"Does she summon you to the Palace?"

"No—not to the palace—"

"Aha! the meeting is to be clandestine!"

"My God!" groaned Naundorff. "How you poison the first happiness I have tasted! Can you not read the state of my soul? Ambition! 'Tis an illusive folly. I long only for those arms to be opened to me in which as a little child I slept. What are a crown and sceptre worth? Such baubles do not allure me. I wish above all things to recover my name and to feel my sister's kisses. Those kisses will banish the spectre back of my forehead. Am I mad? Have I dreamed my past life? *She*, *she* will tell me the truth."

"But father," remonstrated Amélie, "why do you permit such doubts to overpower you? Do you not possess proofs? Have you not cited many corroborating circumstances? Have you not been recognized by your father's faithful servitors? By Madame Rambaud who rocked you in your cradle? Did you not remind her that the blue velvet dress you were to wear to Versailles was tight in the sleeves and that it was in consequence removed? Did she not exclaim on hear-

ing you: 'This is my prince and my king?' "

"Well, Amélie, in spite of these testimonials, I, myself falter in faith. My past seems too extraordinary to fit within the bounds of the possible. Perhaps I *am* a visionary, one of the many in the ranks of spurious Dauphins who have emerged from every corner of France. 'Tis true that I possess genuine documentary proof; of that I am certain. But these papers may have been placed in my hands for an end incomprehensible to me. Montmorin, himself, that hero of loyalty, may have been duped. This is the terrible suspicion which seizes me always at the moment when I most require confidence and courage."

Amélie sent René a look almost of anguish. Naundorff continued:

"*She* is the only cure for this unbearable incertitude. *She* is all that remains of my past. Her voice calling me 'Brother' will sweep the cobwebs from my brain and restore my faith forever."

"Are we to understand, Monseigneur," asked René, "that you may not enter the Palace? Is Madame to visit you here?"

"No; we have agreed to meet in Versailles park, the place where as children we so often played together. My sister is accustomed to visit Ver-

sailles occasionally that she may be undisturbed in her religious devotions and perform works of charity among the poor. Ah! my sister is an angel. In the midst of the brilliant court life, she is an angel. They have sought to harden her and weaken her clear judgment, but such effort has been futile. Yes, 'tis Versailles where we shall meet in six days, next Thursday. I am to be just without the garden. We are to meet in the grove of Apollo, from which the public is excluded; she visits the park only on festival days. All these details have been explained.—I know so well that our first act will be to cast ourselves into each other's arms and mingle our tears. We have not yet mourned our mother together!"

Louis Pierre contracted his thin lips in a bitter smile and caustically remarked:

"So this is to be all, Monseigneur? Only a fraternal embrace?"

"No, indeed. She wishes to see the documents. I shall therefore take them to her and also the manuscript—"

If a bomb had exploded in their midst, not more consternation could have been evinced. They exclaimed in chorus:

"The papers!"

"Never!" protested Amélie.

"'Tis an infernal trap!" exclaimed Louis Pierre.

"Bandits! The snare is well laid," added Giacinto.

"Monseigneur!" implored de Brezé. "Those papers are of inestimable value to us; they should be exhibited only before a court of justice. Our enemies seek to obtain possession of these papers, and, if they succeed, our cause is lost. The watch-maker Naundorff will be without proofs of his identity."

Naundorff became tremulous with anger.

"Dare not impute such infamy to my sister or I shall attribute villainy to yourselves. In this matter, I accept suggestions from no one. 'Tis an affair between God and myself. This is not a question for man to settle, for what value have the misleading judgments of earth? *I* alone decide. *I* am the State! *I* am the King. These papers pertain to myself only, even as my life is my exclusive property. If my sister, on seeing me, shall waive material proofs, how happy I shall be! But if she doubt or repulse me, what a joy, what a Satanic joy 'twill be to fling these testimonials in her face and say, 'Farewell forever. Our mother curses you!'"

He broke into a mocking laugh, such a laugh as terminates in nervous hysteria, while the others

with saddened faces remained silent. Then he rose to leave, saying to de Brezé:

"René, I trust to you to bring me the papers Thursday morning. If you do not accede to this request, you will force me to violence."

As he passed out, Amélie said entreatingly to her lover:

"Save him in spite of himself. Keep them in their place of concealment, for there they are secure."

"Most secure," replied de Brezé. "They are with a friend, Gontran de Lorne. He thinks them a compromising love correspondence of mine. Who would suspect that amiable Lovelace? Nevertheless, in spite of his dissipations, he is a man of honor and discretion. I guarantee the security of the papers while they remain with Gontran. But should your father demand them, Amélie, I cannot refuse. He is the arbiter of his fate and of our own as well."

The Carbonari meanwhile conversed in low tones. After a while Louis Pierre advanced saying:

"There lives in Versailles a sister of mine, who terminated her vagrant peddling existence by the establishment of a little shop. Giacinto and I have formulated a plan which we shall explain to

you. We cannot fold our arms in the moment of danger."

"Noble friends!" said Amélie, extending her hands to the two men.

"No, Mademoiselle; you are entitled to our lives. You were made in heaven and the mourning you wear for that unfortunate peasant testifies to the greatness of your soul. I would let myself be torn to pieces for you. Our danger is grave. From the moment the papers are delivered to our enemies, our necks will be in danger. Louis Pierre and I are endeavoring to counteract the blunder which—pardon me,—was committed in consequence of your father's generosity. I take an oath that 'tis the man whom I have vowed to kill that has woven the net which has caught your father. Has not your father suffered enough to destroy the impression that all men are to be trusted?"

"My opinion," said Louis Pierre, "is that the hands that have woven the snare are whiter and more patrician than the spy's, however much he love and care for them. An iniquitous plot has been hatched at the Duchess's shoulders, for the securing of the papers. If we find it impossible to prevent the catastrophe, why vengeance remains," he concluded, his face taking on a tragic grandeur.

Chapter VI

LOUIS PIERRE'S SISTER

THOSE to whom the gardens and parks of Versailles are not familiar can form no idea of the manner in which aristocratic dignity imparts elegance to rural sites. The impression is not that of sweet melancholy so often produced by country scenes but rather of a lofty magnificence, which weighs upon the soul and becomes even a solemn ennui, which proceeds from the very regularity and grandeur of the royal domain, wherein one still involuntarily looks for powder-headed dames and cavaliers in embroidered waist-coats.

On Sundays it was permitted the public to enjoy the park, which during the week was deserted save for the gardeners and guard, who, wearing bandoliers and holding rifles, watched over the safety of whatever members of the royal family happened to be in the Palace.

Nazario Patin, sergeant of the guard, was quite taken aback on receiving orders to retire the soldiers on Thursday from the avenue leading to the

Great lawn, from the Latona pond, the Columnata wood and the Apollo grove. A second order, no less explicit, followed to the effect that he was to hold these guards in waiting in the assembly hall, in case they should be needed.

On Wednesday evening the Duchess arrived at the Palace. Patin soliloquized:

"She wishes to promenade tomorrow and look on no human countenance, so greatly is she given to prayer and meditation. But that the guard should be retired! Hum! I can't understand."

On Thursday four men wearing the simple uniform of the ordinary guard, bearing rifles and in their belts hunting knives, arrived in the deserted park from the Ville d'Avray road and approached one of the little gates opening towards les Trianones which Marie Antoinette, discarding pompous ceremonial, used to frequent. Cautiously they opened the gate, using a key carried by him who seemed the leader. They held a conference in low tones, as tho fearful of disturbing the birds in the trees. The leader's southern type revived recollections of the Catalan smuggler, Albert Serra, a gentleman whom we met in the apartments of Baron Lecazes, just returned from London and professing to have successfully lightered a ship of a cargo of cutlery. This was

Volpetti's disguise when he wished to represent a man of the lower classes.

"Beware!" he was saying to the others. "Listen well and execute even better. A false step will be fatal to our object. You, Lestrade, are to guide him into the garden. He comes by the route we have taken and will travel on foot from this side Le Chesnay. As for you, Sec and La Grive, remain without, near the gate. I only shall remain inside the park. When he leaves the garden, I shall follow him; and if I signal you by raising my arm, throw yourselves upon him, gagging and binding him. Whatever you find upon his person is to be taken to my superior, the Minister of Police. No matter what happens save the booty. Your lives, my life, are worth nothing in comparison. Whoever carries the prize to the Minister will be a lucky man, I pledge my word."

Making motions of assent, the party dispersed. A deep quiet spread over the park, along whose paths the Duchess was even now walking. Her dress of violet silk embroidered in passementerie, betokened mourning. She held her hand on her heart to still its beating. At about the same time, Patin, sergeant of the guard, his services not being required, turned his steps in the direction of

a lady friend, a certain laundress, in whose kitchen, so gossip had it, there was never lack of savory dishes and pleasant chitchat for the handsome sergeant. On ascending the stairway, he met a girl whose face seemed glorified by the splendor light of yellow hair, arranged in curls, according to the style of the period. As he drew back to make room for her, he muttered to himself:

"The picture of the beheaded Queen!"

Some moments later he was asking the laundress, as she stood at her table ironing a dainty garment:

"Who is that young girl in mourning that has just left your neighbor's apartment?"

"I do not know. I have never spoken with her but I scent a mystery. There is a cat in a bag, several cats, rather. You know my neighbor well."

"I should say I did. I have known her and her brother Louis Pierre Louvel a lifetime. Such a sullen silent fellow! I wonder where he is now. No one seems to have heard of him since the banishment of his beloved Emperor."

"Why he is here, my boy. He has been here for three days. He brought with him to his sister's house that young girl and a handsome young man. They came stealthily and they have all kept as quiet as mice. I have not seen even Louis Pierre's

sister. She must however go out at night to buy provisions. But through a window I have seen the faces of Louis Pierre and the handsome gentleman."

"Has he been casting eyes at you?" jealously inquired Patin, whereupon his mistress boxed his ears, and so diverted his thoughts from this trend of suspicion regarding the new comers.

"I could swear that these people are conspiring," remarked the laundress.

"You are dreaming, my dear. I have but just met the girl on the stairs. Why should you become suspicious because a brother visits his sister?"

"That a brother should visit a sister causes me no surprise, but there are queer kinds of brothers and queer ways of paying visits. Will you believe that the sister denied to me yesterday that her brother was with her?"

"Rosa, that is indeed strange," remarked the sergeant pensively.

"I do not like Louis Pierre. He is capable of anything."

"Well, my little Rosa, stop your gossip. I don't suppose danger is being plotted. Neither the King nor Princes are in the castle; as for the Duchess, she is a saint whom no one would harm. What

amazes me is the resemblance of the girl to the dead Queen."

"She is a live bird, I'll warrant," answered the woman.

While this dialogue was in progress, the blond girl in black rapidly crossed several streets and reached a deserted square shaded by elm trees. She was almost immediately joined by a man with whom she walked for some distance, entering at last the beginning of a park by a path which skirted the wall. The man consulted from time to time a paper plan which he carried in his hands. He stopped suddenly and examined a breach in the wall.

"Louis Pierre was right," he said.

He vaulted the fence and held forth his arms for the girl, who, crawling along the ruins, came within his reach. Taking her by the waist, he held her for a moment against his breast and spoke passionate words of love.

"Amélie!" he whispered, "when will you become mine for all time? I adore you more than ever."

"René, I long for it as much as you. But O the saddest of presentiments weighs upon me. My father's mind seems giving way beneath the weight of his sorrows. His reason is clouded and con-

fused. If his sister does not open her arms today, alas for him, alas for us! And she will not; this interview is part of an infernal plot—"

"Amélie, you express my fears also. But none of your father's friends are sleeping on their oars. Louis Pierre knows every inch of ground on this place. We are here to defend the cause, he, Giacinto and I. 'Twould have been better had you not come."

"Perhaps so, René, but I wanted so much to be near you. Do not heed my seeming coldness of the last few days. How could I fail in mourning for that innocent, noble man,—victim of low intrigues and his own loyalty? He typifies the people, the people sacrificed to the classes."

"I have been jealous of your devotion, your gratitude. I have longed to be the dead. Had I died, what should you have done?"

"Died with you, René."

He stooped and kissed her eyes, holding her close in his arms.

Chapter VII

THE INTERVIEW

ON reaching the appointed place, the Duchess fell upon a garden seat, seemingly very tired. Taking a lace handkerchief from the reticule which hung at her wrist, she wiped the perspiration from her forehead. She consulted the watch at her belt and found it lacked ten minutes of the time set. She sighed, resigning herself to wait.

At last she heard the approach of footsteps; some moments later a man with uncoverd head stood before her. Marie Thérèse de Bourbon uttered no cry. She was stricken dumb. After so many years, she beheld standing before her against the crimson background of the sky, which looked like a nimbus of blood, the Past, the terrible, tragic Past. It surged again to overwhelm her, that Past, the sorrows of which seemed to have been calmed by time; the terrors of the prison; the flaring up of frail hopes destined to be dashed to earth; the incertitude of the fate of loved ones; ardent prayers to heaven to work

miracles; entreaties; outrages; infinite despair: all these rose again out of that terrible Past and stood before her.

She could not speak; she could scarcely see; but she felt hot tears through her silk skirt and trembling arms clasp her knees while a heart-rending voice cried:

"Marie Thérèse! Marie Thérèse!"

"Rise," she said at last, almost inaudibly. "Be seated."

He staggered to the stone bench beside her. She averted her head in order to avoid seeing his grief-stricken face. A silence followed which the lady at last broke:

"You perceive, Sir, that I have complied with your request. What do you wish?"

"To remind you that I am your brother, the brother whom your mother bore."

"My brother—died," she faltered.

"He lives and speaks to you. Dare you look upon me and deny it? I carry on my face the marks of royal baptism and of prison torture."

"My God!" she groaned.

"Why do you not acknowledge me?" he cried with waxing indignation. "I believed that on receiving me you would take me to your heart. I thought you felt the great thirst that devours me.

I thought that you and I should mourn our mother in each other's arms. Why did you receive me, if you had already decided to treat me as an impostor? Are you about to turn me out of your palace gates along with the dogs and beggars? After all that I have suffered?"

Making a terrible effort, she said:

"You have spoken of proofs, irrefutable proofs."

"Miserable woman, until today I thought that the wall which separates us should be demolished on our meeting. But I see it is of iron. Listen, then. You ask me for the documents. Well, those documents shall be presented at a French tribunal, and you with the others shall be brushed off the usurped throne. You refuse to acknowledge me; well, when the world salutes me King, you will admit I am your brother. Europe will proclaim what no court can deny. Until then, farewell."

She trembled and softly spoke his name:

"Charles Louis!"

Her voice seemed to come from an immense distance. He cried out almost in delirium:

"Thérèse, Thérèse, my adored sister!"

He caught the Duchess in his arms almost strangling her. He wept and laughed together for at last his overmastering desire was filled.

He felt a wild longing to dance. Scarcely realizing the craftiness of her thoughts, she assured herself with feminine complacency that she should now do with him as she chose.

"You know me at last,—do you, Thérèse? You no longer repulse me? O how happy I am! Only thro you do I believe in myself, for tho I told you with so much assurance just now that I was your brother, I doubted my own words. Are you surprised that much suffering seems to have clouded my brain? On leaving prison, you found friends and shelter and affection and at last a throne; you returned to our father's palace amid acclamations and festivities. How can you divine my suffering? See, I have written them that you may read."

He took from his pocket an oblong case of yellow calf.

"I intended that the Marquis de Brezé, whom I regard as my son should bring you this. But perhaps 'tis better that you receive it from me. When you read my via crucis, you will not marvel that my past life seems to me a dream, a forgery of a madman's delirium. Only you can relieve me of this intolerable fear and restore me to faith in myself. You have called me Charles Louis, my name in infancy and early childhood. Those who

now call me Louis do not know this. Ah, Thérèse, God bless you!"

Again he embraced her and together they recalled incidents of the past.

"Do you remember," he asked, "how in prison a wall separated us and we were never permitted to speak together? Well, I used to place my ear to the wall and listen for your footsteps."

"Charles Louis," she said with a great effort, "if love of your sister has caused you to seek me, prove that love by granting a request."

"Ask my life if you will."

"What I ask may be more difficult to give. I am going to beg you,—listen!—to renounce what you have so long desired. Be very calm. The Revolution submerged the throne, the altar and whatever our family represented and supported. Providence has replaced us on the throne; the great days of the monarchy have returned; the churches have been re-opened; our country has been reconciled to its monarchs and its God,—the God who has placed the crown upon our uncle's head rather than upon yours. God has perhaps selected you as the victim, innocent tho you be. He has required your sacrifice and he continues to require it. To what do you aspire today? Are you thinking of placing arms in the hands of our

father's executioners? Have you come, Charles Louis, to win the applause of hell?"

He could not answer for gazing upon her.

"Your duty is to retire to peace and quietude. Whatever be your rights, your duty is to stifle your pretensions. I assure you this is true."

"And my children, Thérèse? My sons? I have the sons which have been denied to both you and Ferdinand. No one but me can present an heir. My seed has fallen upon blessed ground in being mingled with the people."

The Duchess experienced great anger, as she always did at any allusion to her sterility, and she retorted harshly:

"The heir whom you present is from a woman of low extraction, the fruit of a union unsanctioned by the Catholic Church. And you dare aspire to the throne? Remember the Corsican! He also sought to improvise a dynasty. All that survives of that farce is the daughter of a real emperor and the son of the adventurer, sheltered by that emperor's throne. If you believed yourself a king, why did you marry a plebeian? Why did you not restrain your passions? And you complain of your fate? As for your heart, you have followed its impulses. I married my cousin because the state required the union. Ferdinand separated

from his loved Amy Brown and abandoned his children, one of them a son, in order to marry Caroline. Are you willing to do likewise? I know well you are not. Believe me, believe me, Charles Louis, life is not what we would wish but as God ordains it to be. Your fate has been to live far from the throne—Resign yourself to the decree. Do not violate the most holy PRINCIPLE, the PRINCIPLE for which our father died. He adjures you from the tomb to accept your lot."

Her eloquence subjugated him, for she spoke from her heart's conviction.

"God was God, yet he lived and died a man," she continued. "Live then and die a man, my brother. Will you?—a man of the people."

In a transport of abnegation, he kissed her cheeks and said:

"I will."

In confirmation of his promise, he drew the casket of documents from his breast and held them toward her.

"Here they are," he said. "Here are the papers which sustain my claims. They are of such a nature, especially the testimony of the unhappy Pichegru, Charette, Hoche and Josephine that I could demand the throne by presenting them in a court. I despoil myself of my person-

ality, of my strength. I become again Naundorff, the obscure mechanic, the impostor, the convict, the outlaw! Take the papers, Marie Thérèse, I give them to you. The sacrifice is accomplished. Have you more to ask of me? And now, sister, holy love of my life, all that remains to me of my mother,—call me once more Charles Louis—let me rest my forehead on your breast."

She was scarcely able to control herself. He attracted and repelled her by turns. She was about to extend her hand for the papers when, by the light of the setting sun, intense and red, he so greatly resembled her father that she dared not accomplish her purpose. With involuntary reverence, she said:

"No, Charles Louis, the papers are yours. Keep them. Promise me, only, that you will not misuse them. I shall be satisfied with your word. I ask this of you because I must. Accept your fate, as I accept mine. Accept it as you would a cross. O Charles Louis, the Past is irrevocable, your Past and mine, and who knows which of us has suffered the more greatly? Farewell, farewell, my brother. Do not forget your oath."

"I shall remember it, my sister. God bless you! I have received all that I expected from

you. I count this day happy. I shall remove with my family to Holland. May my children never suffer the pangs of poverty! I trust that no further assaults will be made upon my life. And now, for one moment—"

He laid his head upon the lady's shoulder and wept.

Chapter VIII

THE AMBUSH

AS Naundorff left the garden, a man, hidden amid the shrubbery advanced cautiously and reached the little gate holding there a short conversation with one of the spies, La Grive.

"He carries a casket which must be captured. I reiterate my previous instructions. That casket must be seized. Where are Sec and Lestrade?"

"Within two steps. Shall I call them?"

"Keep very quiet. Remember to make no use of firearms. If he make no resistance, do not harm him. Run. Find the others. He is almost here."

"Very well."

The two spies, disguised as guards, separated. Volpetti waited back of the gate and on Naundorff's arrival, he solicitously held it open. Naundorff did not look toward the other, but even had he, the black hair and beard of Albert Serra would have misled him completely. He was surrounded by the party of spies, who were in turn surrounded

by de Brezé and the Carbonari. The latter were concealed by the foliage, from a height dominating the path. Like the spies, they had planned to use firearms only in case of an extremity.

Naundorff passed through the gate, deep in thought. His sister's voice was in his ears; he felt again her caresses. His mind was at peace and the incertitude regarding his individuality set at rest. Had she not called him brother? Now he was tranquil, free from tormenting doubts. Despoiled of his rights, perhaps, but impostor or maniac never! He thought of Amélie, dreading to tell her the result of the interview. Suddenly a hand was placed over his mouth, his arms were pinned to his sides and he could neither cry nor defend himself. Volpetti searched him and possessed himself of the case of papers with a triumphant laugh. There was no need to employ force; nevertheless, through an excess of precaution the spies gagged their victim and tied his hands.

All this was accomplished with the utmost celerity. Naundorff had been reduced to immobility when de Brezé and the two Carbonari ran up. Using cudgels, they stunned Lestrade and disabled La Grive. De Brezé then devoted himself to Sec, and Giacinto turned, infuriated, on

Volpetti. This king of spies held the papers, determined to keep them at the cost of his life, and was for this reason unable to handle his hunting knife with his accustomed dexterity. The Sicilian dealt him a vigorous blow on the collar bone which caused him to drop the case of papers. Lights danced in his eyes and he felt as tho about to swoon. With a great effort he recovered his senses sufficiently to aim a blow at Giacinto's neck, as the Sicilian stooped to grasp the case. The wound would have been fatal had not Giacinto evaded it by a rapid movement which resembled the spring of a tiger. All the evil which his family had suffered from Volpetti flashed thro his mind and outweighed Naundorff's interests; he forgot the papers for his own grievances, especially his brother's body hanging from the gibbet. Clinching his white teeth, he dashed upon the enemy, knocked the knife out of his hand and jerked the false beard from his face. Volpetti lacked neither courage nor coolness, but he was a constructive intelligence rather than a physical force. Giacinto was much the younger and just now impelled by a homicidal vertigo. Volpetti sought to rise, but Giacinto pushed his head back and knelt with one knee upon his breast. In an access of savage joy, he cut through his neck,

accompanying the action with dreadful oaths and invocations to the Madonna.

While the Sicilian satiated his thirst for vengeance, one of the other spies, La Grive, regained his footing and fought desperately with Louis Pierre, whom he quickly so battered with fist blows that the Knight of Liberty lay prone upon the grass. La Grive next turned his attention upon Giacinto and Volpetti. The latter lay dead in a pool of blood. The case of papers was near. He remembered the leader's injunction: 'The casket must be saved at all costs.' Seizing his opportunity, while Giacinto feasted his eyes upon his dead enemy, he grasped the papers and ran off, soon being lost among the trees. So vanished the last proofs of Naundorff's identity.

The defeat was complete. It was the culmination of the lengthy drama initiated in prison and developed in London, Dover, Picmort and Paris. While La Grive possessed himself of the papers René was engaged in combat with the brutal and athletic Sec. At length he dispossessed him of his hunting knife and threw him senseless, as he thought, to the ground. Then he ran swiftly to Naundorff and cut his cords. Sec watched his opportunity. Gliding noiselessly toward his vanquisher, he aimed a bullet which made René spin

around and fall lifeless to the ground. It had pierced his heart.

Meanwhile, the Duchess, motionless on her garden seat, was powerless to summon the courage to return to the castle. Scarcely could she restrain herself from running after Naundorff, calling, "Brother, brother!" The sun no longer reddened the sky. The evening was chill. Suddenly a shot rang out. She shuddered but remained paralyzed, in the throes of conflicting emotions. The branches rustled and swift footsteps hurried along the path. Was this an apparition? A young girl in black, her face framed in a glory of golden hair, her hands raised menacingly and dropping blood! It was the image of her mother, her eyes gleaming, her mouth livid and mutely pronouncing maledictions and her forefinger held prophetically and accusingly in the Duchess's face.

Marie Thérèse de Bourbon fell upon the ground, writhing and groaning: "Mother, mother!"

Chapter IX

GIACINTO'S FATE

SOLIVIAC nimbly leaped to the wharf from a skiff and held out his hands to Louis Pierre and Giacinto. He uncovered respectfully to Naundorff and Amélie and caressed Baby Dick's head, as the little fellow clung to his adoptive mother's hand.

Amélie, in deep mourning, was the shadow of her former self. Wasted away, almost blue in her pallor, her sunken eyes surrounded by red circles, and of an agonized expression, she was indeed the picture of the unhappy queen; not the queen in laces and crowned with roses, but the queen of the prison and the guillotine. Like unto Marie Antoinette, sorrow only augmented her grace and dignity. When she held her hand to Soliviac to be kissed, no court might show so regal a movement.

Naundorff opened his arms to Soliviac, both shedding tears.

"When do we start?" the former asked, as though longing to be off.

"At once, if Monseigneur wishes."

"Do not call me 'Monseigneur.' That is over, Captain. I am only Naundorff, the mechanic, the chemist. You are taking me from a land where I have known only sorrow to a country of peace and liberty. In Holland my good wife and little children await me. There shall I forget my insensate dreams, the cause of my ills. Because of my refusal to accept the decrees of fate, I have been punished in whom I most love, this daughter. A widow twice, never having been a wife, her life is blighted forever. The prison walls did not lie in speaking to me the terrible words: 'Your friends shall perish.'"

Amélie laid her hand on her father's shoulder. Her eyes were dry. She seemed to forgive him all that she had suffered.

"My friends," added Naundorff, turning to the Carbonari, "let us give the lie to the prison prophecy. Since I am given respite and my persecutors seem to be satiated from having rifled me of my certificates; since they ignore my interview with the woman—whom I have forgiven (may my mother in heaven forgive her also)—; friends, return to a quiet life and cease to combat, cease to conspire, cease to avenge! A clear light illumines my mind and heart. I see what I would impart to

you. Listen: Resist not evil; rather return good for evil. He who uproots the hedge will be bitten by the serpent, say the words of eternal wisdom. Forgive that you may be forgiven."

Louis Pierre turned his face away that Naundorff might not see the keen light in his eyes.

"Farewell, farewell!" repeated the outlaw. "I am a simple man, henceforth. My only title is that of Man. I go to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow. I go to die obscurely. Embrace me again."

The two Carbonari folded their arms around him, Giacinto shedding tears. Naundorff said gently:

"Thanks, thanks! Peace descend upon you both. Cease to struggle, claim not your dues. And you, Giacinto, do penance. Your hands are stained with blood."

The Sicilian involuntarily looked upon those members. Just then they were seized by Amélie, who whispered in his ear:

"O Giacinto, do not reproach yourself! 'Twas simple justice. Listen. She who prepared the ambuscade shall herself leave France in banishment, or else there is no God."

Some moments later the sloop glided out of port. Erect and majestic, like unto a dethroned queen,

Amélie waved an adieu to the Knights of Liberty.

Giacinto and Louis Pierre stood motionless on the wharf which now began to be covered with fishermen, sailors and venders. Their eyes were riveted upon the sloop as she reached the schooner Polipheme. They could still distinguish the black form of Amélie and her father's grave outlines. The Polipheme weighed anchor, spread sails and gracefully cleaved the waves red with the morning sun.

The gay voices of the crowd ashore awaiting the arrival of the fishing smacks constituted so brilliant a tout ensemble that Giacinto, notwithstanding the sad parting from his friends, felt new life rushing through his veins and joy tugging at his heart strings. He looked at Louis Pierre. That face wore an expression recalling vengeance and the scaffold. Shuddering, the Sicilian returned to reality.

"They are gone, Louis Pierre," said he, in order to break the silence. "They are gone,—those royal personages whom history will fail to enumerate."

"Giacinto, you should have gone to Holland with them. I advise you as a friend, for in Versailles you have a mistress whom you have filched from a guard,—a dangerous experiment. O, I know all about it; she lives on our floor. Do

you think the bird worth the risking of your neck? Yes, it was best for our friends to go. The police pretend to have forgotten us. 'Tis a trap. They will not forget to square accounts with the man who sent Volpetti to his brother Satan.—You are a child, Giacinto, and may be led to any pasture by a petticoat string—"

"Bah!" interrupted the other. "Were it not for petticoats, what savor would remain to life? My dear little laundress has set me quite crazy with love and the sergeant is dying with jealousy. Will you believe that here also I have discovered a jewel of a woman?—the daughter of a tinker. And I am either a fool or this night—"

"So you remain? You are indeed a fool, Giacinto. I shall work out my ends, henceforth, without your aid. Tho I be sought, I shall not be found; even tho I be found, I shall not be caught, and even tho I be caught, I shall not be retained. In this enigma I speak the truth."

Giacinto's superstitious nature was aroused.

"Why do you say these words, friend?" he asked.

"Because no man is overcome until he has performed his assigned task," serenely replied the Knight of Liberty. "Was the Other One overcome before he had subjugated Europe? Today

he is chained to Saint Helena, but he first demonstrated the might of the Revolution. Before he could demonstrate the might of Despotism, he was overpowered, for this the Fates would not permit."

"We are not the Other One."

"Each man is the Other One. Each man may change the world if he acts of himself."

"Bah!" retorted Giacinto. "We are pawns on a chess-board. Poor devils, we but play our part. What matters it to me that it be primary or secondary? I have sent to hell the devil who killed my brother. For the rest, a fig!—I feel his warm blood on my hands now!"

His nostrils dilated at the ghastly memory, his lips smacked with savage joy, his handsome face glowed with exultation.

"Yes," answered Louis Pierre in a solemn voice. "Your work is accomplished. Fear, Giacinto, for you are now a hollow shell. Remember how the dastardly Volpetti was given life only to accomplish his mission. Volpetti was delivered to you when he had secured the documents for Lecazes. But my work is as yet unfulfilled. For that reason I am secure. My history is as yet unwritten."

"And it shall remain unwritten, my friend. What have two poor devils such as you and I to do

with history, especially since we no longer accompany royalty?"

"I am a man," retorted Louis Pierre Louvel. "Have you measured the power of a man? Giacinto, the birth of an individual is of transcendent importance. Remember Him who was born in Judea. Consider the significance of a male child to the House of France! This rotten dynasty which the Cossack has forced us to again endure may yet sprout forth fresh and green, and all because of a child's birth."

By this time the two Carbonari had reached their lodgings. They ascended to their humble apartments. Louis Pierre took up his knapsack and, according to the French custom, kissed his companion on the cheek.

"Are we not to breakfast together?" asked Giacinto.

"By breakfast time, I shall be far away from this place. You should be also," replied Louis Pierre.

"What would the tinker's daughter think of her sweetheart? She has this morning peeped from her window five times. She has thrown me a flower and waved her hand—"

The fatalist remonstrated no further. Carrying his light equipage, he descended the rickety stairs.

Naundorff had paid the bills. He might, therefore, depart, without seeking the host. His rickety form took the direction of the woods and was soon lost to view.

An hour later Giacinto sat before a succulent repast of stewed fish. A girl held to his lips a glass of foamy beer. Just then steps and the clanking of muskets sounded on the stairway. The officer heading the soldiers laid a hand on the Sicilian's shoulder, saying:

"Manacle his hands."

Chapter X

A DESCENDANT OF HENRY OF NAVARRE

IN a human existence there may be a culminating moment,—a moment in which ambitions are realized and reality adapts itself to the dreamed-of ideal. The maneuvers of a subterranean state-craft during that epoch of incessant conspiracy had raised Lecazes to the pinnacle of glory. The Police was in its apogee, holding triumphantly in its hands the warp whose reverse side was espionage, provocation, indictment, torture, and whose obverse consisted of brilliant court ceremonials, stormy discussions in Councils and diplomatic strife in the royal coterie, wherein conservative and reactionary parties contended bitterly. Dominating the maneuvers from his cabinet, the genial Minister reigned,—the arbiter of the nation. He was the real master. He held the reins and guided the King with well dissembled strategy, as well as the other members of the royal family and the courtiers and officials,—all of whom complacently obeyed him, in their solicitude

for the maintenance of the legitimate government.

Nevertheless, to use his own expression, "his life flowed between two walls of paper." He was accustomed to say that Paper was his worst enemy, adding, "You may rid yourself of a man but not of a piece of written paper." Excepting those retained as future shields, he tore all such sheets into bits, and compromising documents he burned.

It was the month of February. Lecazes sat in the same closet in which he had received the Duchess de Rousillon. A cloud was upon his face and an expression at once stealthy and rapacious, such as characterizes the countenances of all selfishly ambitious men, when alone. The cause of his preoccupation was a letter just received. It was anonymous and contained only these brief clauses:

"Naundorff is despoiled, de Brezé murdered, Giacinto executed. They shall be avenged. Guard the trunk; as for the limbs they are despicable."

Such communications seldom troubled the Minister, accustomed as he was to the language of charlatans. He usually destroyed the epistles, smiling a Machiavellian smile. But this letter troubled him, for it was not the first of the series;

others had periodically preceded it, giving no clue to the writer and seeming to have for object a warning to the intended victim.

"There is not a thread of the net which I may not snap at will," he soliloquized. "They are not indeed thinking of avenging de Brezé or Naundorff—nor even that insignificant Carbonaro whom I have had to execute. I did not do so as retaliation for Volpetti's death. However much I miss him, I can not replace him. He was my hands and feet. But pshaw! in state-craft we waive vengeance and travel direct to our ends,—the Carbonari to the demolishing of the throne, I to the sustaining of it. To sustain it I have wrought miracles. Had I not obtained the papers which have cost me Volpetti, alas for the dynasty! The happy exit must console me for the loss of my best man."

Re-reading the anonymous sheet, his attention was arrested by the phrase "Guard the trunk."

"Who is the trunk?" he asked himself. "I should overestimate even my own importance to suppose they mean me. Can it be the King? Poor decayed trunk, soon to fall beneath the great woodman's ax! Can it be his brother? Impossible!—that hollow reactionary, incorrigible trunk. He is the Carbonari's best ally. I know

not what will be the outcome of the King's succumbing to gout. Can it be the Duke Louis? Sterile trunk! No, if any one in particular is signified, 'tis Ferdinand,—the destined perpetuator of the race. Let us see! Lecazes, imagine yourself a conspirator. Whom would you attack? Why Ferdinand! Ferdinand the debonnaire, the well-loved, the generator of heirs. May this writing be the effusion of some fool? Or is it a conspirator's dash of romantic honor in warning the intended victim? However that be, I must warn the Prince. He is as unsuspicious and gay and heroic as his ancestor, Henry of Navarre. Flatterers assure him that he is that great monarch's prototype. He and his wife go about so freely and to every kind of diversion. During one of these sky-larkings—Ah! kings may not live as other men. Naundorff little realizes the good turn I did him and his family by barring his approach to the throne, nor she either, the audacious little intriguante. She has ample opportunity now to devote her energies to the weaving of Flemish laces."

These thoughts still occupied him when he that afternoon entered the royal cabinet. Before the monarch stood a table whose draperies were arranged to conceal the swollen feet, for the gout

grew daily worse. Nevertheless, in frequent carriage rides and an incessant sortie of fine classic raillery from his patrician lips, Louis XVIII demonstrated an increased activity.

When Lecazes entered, the valetudinarian smiled piquantly, as one might in slipping manacles on the wrists of an astute diplomat. Handing the Minister a threatening letter, he vehemently asked:

"What does this mean, Baron? I am asked for an audience. I am told that some one possesses knowledge of impending evil to the royal family. I am warned that the refusing of this interview will be the cause of disaster to those dearest to me. It follows that some one is better informed than I concerning our interests. Is not this a humiliating position for a King?"

As Lecazes was about to answer, there entered unannounced a man in the prime of life. He had a prepossessing nonchalant impetuous manner. This was Prince Ferdinand, second son of the King's brother Charles, sole hope of the race's continuation. He was not handsome but he possessed in a high manner the simple frankness and graceful address characteristic of certain members of the Bourbon family, which was so captivating as to create around them, even in times of popular

discontent, an atmosphere of loyalty. Ferdinand was short of stature and irregular in feature, but his bright glance and irradiating vitality acted always as a great jubilant wave enveloping all near him. A generous and cordial nature, rising spontaneously to heroism, was revealed in his face, mingled with a noble energy.

"Sire," he said, kissing his uncle's hand, "I pray you to pardon my intrusion. I have an urgent communication which must not be delayed a moment."

Lecazes made a discreet movement of withdrawal.

"No, no, Baron," interposed Ferdinand. "I pray you to remain. I expected to find you here. I know, besides, that His Majesty has no secrets from you. Indeed, I suppose you are better informed concerning this tangle than I, for your fingers it is that have woven the mesh."

"To what does your Royal Highness allude?" asked Lecazes guardedly.

"To letters which I constantly receive," replied Ferdinand sharply. "Letters which have kept me awake more than one night."

"Love letters?" ironically inquired Lecazes. "Your Royal Highness inspires innumerable passions. 'Tis no marvel that these letters rain upon

you. What I find amusing is your simplicity in taking them seriously."

The Prince's frank countenance darkened. His brow contracted and his lips curled disdainfully as he replied:

"Baron, I am not accustomed to discuss such questions with others,—least of all with the police! The matter concerns ,—bah! why should I relate this to you?—the matter concerns a member of our family who has been rifled of personal documents and forced into exile, in order to avoid even more barbarous treatment."

"Will Your Royal Highness be good enough to mention the name of—this—member of the royal House?"

"You know his name better than I, since 'twas you who prepared the villainous ambuscade and the other iniquities which I shall not enumerate."

"Who is Your Royal Highness's informant?" asked Lecazes, turning livid.

"One who knows whereof he speaks," replied the Prince producing a packet of letters.

"But Ferdinand, my son, why do you credit such calumniators?" interposed the King.

"Sire, these are not calumnies. If you consider them such, why not turn upon them the light of day? To me they have ample confirma-

tion in the face of Monsieur the Superintendent of Police, or in your own, Sire, or in that of Madame my cousin and sister-in-law. I have seen her swoon on hearing the name of the man whose personal history contains the tragic episodes enacted last summer in Versailles park. The life of that true knight and gentleman, my dear friend, René de Giac, there paid the penalty for his loyalty—he, the son of one of the most valiant of Condé's officers—"

"Ferdinand," stammered the King, his face growing paler and paler, "your words are audacious and unwarranted. From any other than you, I should pronounce them the ravings of a madman. What inference is to be drawn from your asseverations? None other than that we are a usurper, that the Restoration was a robbery and that as restitution, we must deliver up the throne, after having played the rôle of thief, and retire into private life amid the jeers of the spectators. What would follow then, think you? Nothing less than an armed intervention of Europe to restore order in France a second time and clear the bandit caves of their booty."

"We are not speaking of an impostor," insisted Ferdinand bravely.

"Dare you call us usurper, then?" shrieked the King.

The smile on Lecazes's lips was a discharge of gall and the gleam in his eyes was Satanic.

"For my part, Sire," retorted the nephew, "I believe you to be such. I refuse—O more than the glory of thrones and crowns do I cherish honor and the religion of Knighthood. I may or may not have a right to the title Royal Highness, but beyond question I am a soldier, and notwithstanding certain gallantries, a Christian. I do not proclaim my virtue as does my brother Louis, but neither do I ravish another man of his rights. I will not longer live this life. I have tried to make light of these letters. Does Your Majesty know why? Because in all of them breathes a threat, and no man shall think me coward. If God gives me life and France wars, 'twill be demonstrated whether or not I am such. My coming to you now has for object that of declaring to your Majesty that if this matter be not adjudicated according to law and justice and in a manner befitting our family dignity, I shall be forced to the alternative of going to Holland and offering my services to my cousin, as a partial reparation for the iniquity practised upon him."

"And I should not be surprised at your ex-

travagance, my dear nephew," replied the King, irate and sarcastic. "Your action would be in keeping with the conduct of a man who never considers the consequences of his acts, a man who married a London woman of base extraction, —the plebeian Amy Brown, a man who disregards court etiquette so far as to imitate the Corsican in his policy of acquiring popularity with the army, a man whose language in public is such as to undermine the established régime. You would be more satisfactory nephew, were you to fulfill your office, of furnishing France with a male heir of whom we stand in so great need."

Ferdinand, far from evincing annoyance at the burst of wrath, answered serenely:

"Sire, I scarcely think you hold me accountable for failing to counteract the decrees of Providence regarding the birth of an heir. As for the matter which brings me here, I declare that my regard for Your Majesty cannot prevent my speaking my mind. I have considered that it was due you to make you a party to the knowledge of the iniquity, that you might have the opportunity of seconding my resolution. But if our strength is to have its foundation in infamy, a sad future has the House! I ask for but my commission in the army or to be a soldier in the ranks. Your Majesty accuses

me of imitating the Corsican. I reply that the only glory I seek is the glory of arms and of a fearless heart."

"Is this all you would say, nephew?" asked the King, white with rage.

"Your Majesty is offended? Your Majesty dismisses me?"

"His Majesty's strength is unequal to such shocks," interposed Lecazes.

"My Lord Baron," said the Prince, "you are right. I retire. Henceforth, Ferdinand de Bourbon has no guide but his conscience."

Saluting the monarch gravely and the Minister with mock respect, he departed.

Lecazes followed him with a smile. As his footsteps died away, the Baron shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you think of this Lecazes?" inquired the King.

"That we must let the Prince continue the road he has chosen. Place no obstacles in his way—and do not trouble your mind about him. —Many important historical events have just such origins as this.—I shall not meddle in the affairs of His Royal Highness."

In the minister's mind there was formed the picture of a young vigorous tree felled at a blow.

Chapter XI

FERDINAND'S FATE

TWO days later a tumultuous carnival animated Paris. Crowds jostled each other in the streets and gazed upon the procession of the Bull crowned with flowers and the triumphal car freighted with maidens in gala clothes and singing their applause. One of these maidens, a Versailles laundress, was a shining mark, by reason of the brilliancy of her complexion and the gleaming of her hair. On passing the Gate of Saint-Denis, seeing a small man of puny frame and bilious skin she called merrily out to him:

"Hello, Louis Pierre, old owl, de profundis face, don't you want to sup tonight with some happy people at the Inn Mariscale?"

The masks and students near laughed to split their throats, and the interrogated man hastened to conceal himself amid the crowd. He took refuge in his lodgings and devoured his dinner with an almost savage hunger, a strange action,

for he was usually abstemious. Then he went out again and mingled with the crowd. He leaned against the glass windows of the royal theatre and watched the brilliant concourse within. A great festival was in progress. The program announced the "Carnival of Venice" and "The Marriage of Camacho." Carriages rolled, torches gleamed, the crowd surged. The Court was arriving. Louis Pierre felt his head swim. "Now, now!" a voice seemed mockingly to whisper. But in spite of the mandate, he remained inert. Action refused to travel from brain to hands.

"What ails me?" he asked himself. "Is it fear? Is it that I should not? Am I about to perpetrate an act of justice or a crime? Have not my warnings remained unheeded? I could do no more than I have done, unless, indeed, I should deliver myself into their hands—"

While thus he vacillated, Prince Ferdinand and his wife the Princess Caroline descended from their carriage and entered the theatre.

"Another opportunity lost! Vacillations, scruples, absurd perplexities, culpable weaknesses! Have not these people given entrance to the Cossacks and oppressed and rifled the innocent Naundorff? De Brezé's blood cries for vengeance. This besotted city steeped in a Carnival orgie!

What is the Association doing? The Knights seem to sleep on their arms. But Brutus keeps vigil—. Notwithstanding my numerous letters, they have set no watch on me. 'Tis that Destiny protects me. I was born to put my project into execution.—Let us wait, and then—the ax to the trunk."

He walked away objectless through the royal gardens, stumbling at every moment upon groups who sang bacchanalian refrains and prurient couplets from Béranger. Women, with painted faces wearing flowers and greens, flung cynical jests in his face. A drunkard insulted him. He heeded nothing, thirsting only for the fresh night air, which in his feverish condition he inhaled voraciously. Incoherent words rumbling through his brain seemed to urge him to the deed.

"I must obey, I must obey!" he kept saying. "Then I shall find rest. Indecision and torture will be over."

He computed the moments with burning anxiety.

"It must be tonight. When again shall I have the opportunity? Tomorrow I must return to Versailles."

He walked stealthily back and forth, between the garden and the theatre. The night advanced and the streets were growing deserted; the taverns

were being emptied of their occupants; the great clock sounded two, then the half hour; the royal carriages drew up. The Carbonaro glided along the solitary street of Louvois and made his way amid a group of lackeys. His insignificant stature enabled him to remain there unmolested. He was supposed to be some hackney coachman or an assistant placed there for the purpose of guarding horses. Louis Pierre stood motionless close to the wall.

He had not long to wait. Prince Ferdinand descended the steps, accompanying his wife, who was leaving early, being fatigued from a ball which she had attended the previous night. The Prince intended remaining longer,—perchance to hover around some fair face. But, in order to forestall any jealous pangs, he whispered to her gallantly and affectionately, according to his winning nature:

"I shall be with you very soon."

The suspicious, ardent Italian wife and the impulsive, gallant husband were a happy devoted pair. Caroline had warned him, as they left the box, not to remain late.

"Don't wait for the sun to chase you home," she had said, half playfully, half seriously. "I must go now, myself, in order to—be careful of—our secret—the heir we are to give to France."

He reassured her tenderly, solicitously, pressing her arm to his side. On reaching the carriage, he spoke the words we have already reproduced and which are recorded in history as the last words of Ferdinand: "I shall be with you very soon."

She stepped lightly into the carriage and turned her head at the window to have a last look at her husband as he started towards the theatre. He was walking along the pavement of Rameau street, beneath the gay buntings. Louis Pierre stood among the lackeys and sentinels. When later, in the solitude of the dungeon, he lived again the tragic moments of his deed,—he could not understand how he accomplished with such admirable dexterity that which a half hour earlier seemed so difficult of execution. An invisible hand seemed to have guided him and sent his own hand unflinchingly to its task. That powerful man, surrounded by courtiers, friends and sentinels, who, drawn up on each side, presented arms; that man whose splendid physique was revealed through his elegant dress and who with one hand could have hurled to earth the puny creature inflicting death:—that man, Louis Pierre assured himself, had been delivered helpless and unsuspicious into his hands by Fate. He was no longer overpowered by the consciousness of his insignificance; no longer did

he regard himself a despicable atom; within him was a species of lucid inebriation, a glorious wave of pride and confidence. His moment shone. The obscure plebeian had written his page of history.

"Before that moment, my life had amounted to naught. My latent self suddenly sprang into being. To be satisfied with killing a spy! What puerility! So little sufficed the inferior nature of Giacinto."

Thus communed Pierre Louis, as the imperious face of Amélie, her mouth drawn in bitter disdain, with a terrible frown as of an avenging archangel, came to his mind's eye. She stood for the feminine suggestion there is in all tragedy. Great souls are lonely. They so love their ideals that they cannot compromise nor forgive. It seemed to him that the splendid eyes of Naundorff's daughter had fearlessly and unhesitatingly shown him the way to the Prince. As a somnambulist moves, he had accomplished the deed. With his small dagger, he had dealt a marvelously dexterous blow, rapid and to the spot. Ferdinand felt no wound, not even the coldness of the blade; he thought some one chanced to strike against him; suddenly he realized he was about to fall. None of the others suspected the truth. Meanwhile the

assailant disappeared. On reaching the corner of Richelieu street, Louis Pierre nonchalantly slackened his speed and started toward the dark arcades, today in ruins, opposite the stupendous edifice of the library. He was safe from pursuit. None of those near whom he had stood before the theatre knew him. He told himself that his life had trembled on the edge of a blade.

Just then he passed an inn wherein coffee was being served. Fate ordained that a waiter carrying a tray upon which the fragrant beverage steamed should step out of the door and stumble against him, an accident occasioning the breaking of the dishes. The waiter turned infuriated upon the causer of the damage, and, chasing him into the darkness of an alley, caught him by the collar and shook him soundly. The Carbonaro was such a weakling! He seemed to hear an interior voice saying:

"You have wrought. Now 'tis this man's turn."

When Ferdinand reached the vestibule, he involuntarily put his hand to his side, over the unsuspected wound. He felt the projecting hilt of the dagger. The entire blade was buried in his body. He cried out in pain as the fine triangular weapon was extracted. The Princess Caroline

hurried back from her carriage and threw her arms around him and those bare round arms were bathed in blood. Then followed tender heart-rending adieux. The dying Prince poured out his soul during his last hours even as his body delivered up its life. He spoke of glory, of patriotism, of Christian faith, of love, of past faults; but more insistently than ought else, did he plead for the assassin's pardon. As the King bent over him, his lips, livid with the approach of death, implored:

"Forgive him, forgive him! We are all sinners, having need of forgiveness. Sire and uncle, say yes!"

As the King maintained silence, he groaned:

"O my God, do you deny me this dying consolation?"

In his agony, as fever consumed his ebbing life, this descendant of Henry of Navarre, so like that glorious ancestor, even in the manner of his death, murmured:

"Forgive him, forgive him!"

Lecazes, meanwhile, amazed at the swiftness with which the trunk had fallen, approached Louis Pierre, who was a prisoner in one of the lower apartments, and whispered, as he drew him aside:

"Did you do this for money? Have you accomplices?"

The Carbonaro cast upon the Minister a look of scorn, saying:

"Do men do these things for money? I am the avenger of my country and of Naundorff and his daughter. The race perishes. There will be no heir."

"Fool," replied the Minister, gloating over that somber soul's discomfiture, "the Princess is promised an heir."

Louis Pierre turned pale as the futility of the crime overwhelmed him.

"No matter," said he. "I did the deed and I would repeat it a thousand times."

Again he assumed the stoical air and supreme command of self which characterized him in such a high degree both during his trial and upon the scaffold.

The whispered dialogue between Lecazes and the assassin was remarked by the other occupants in the apartment and became the basis of the charge of complicity brought against the Baron and was the cause of his removal and fall. It was said of him that:

"He slipped in the puddle of blood and fell."

FINIS.

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